TWO BOYS AND A FORTUNE

101

Donald
Welker

Please do not
destroy.

"KEEP QUIET, MR. TYLER, OR YOU WILL HAVE US BOTH OVER THE TRESTLE."

Two Boys and a Fortune.

TWO BOYS AND A FORTUNE

Or,

The Tyler Will

BY

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PREFACE

Among all my books, this one will always occupy a particularly warm spot in my heart; for listen, reader, and I will let you into a little secret. Riddle Creek is really Ridley, and is a true-enough stream, flowing through one of the most charming regions in Delaware County, Pennsylvania. The railroad trestle which plays such an important part in the first chapter forms a picturesque feature of the landscape, in full view of a home where I was wont to spend many a joyous holiday-time and which I had in mind whenever I mentioned the Pellery.

Again, the odd little house on Seventh Street, Philadelphia, described in Chapter XXVII, actually existed until pulled down some years since to make room for a big manufacturing plant. I used to visit there every time I went to the Quaker City, and all the furnishings mentioned stand out vividly in my recollection to this day, even to the guitar off in one corner. I never played Fish Pond there, but I have eaten some of the best dinners I ever tasted in that famous kitchen below stairs, which had to serve for dining room as well. That kitchen and the great cat, who used to sun himself in the shop window, loom large in my memories of boyhood.

Matthew White, Jr.

New York City.
Jan. 5, 1907.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	The Man on the Bridge	1
II.	In the Miser's Home	7
III.	Mr. Tyler's Will	14
IV.	The Twin Brothers	22
V.	Breaking the News	30
VI.	Rex Goes to Town	38
VII.	Reginald's Humiliation	45
VIII.	In Sydney's Office	53
IX.	The Mystery About Sydney	60
X.	Roy Makes a New Acquaintance	67
XI.	Mr. Charles Keeler	74
XII.	An Alarming Discovery	81
XIII.	Discussion of Ways and Means	88
XIV.	What Happened at Midnight	95
XV.	Dudley Harrington	103
XVI.	Rex Determines to take Matters into His Own Hands	109
XVII.	Rex Arrives in New York	116
XVIII.	Rex Sees a Horrible Spectacle	123
XIX.	A Memorable Night	129
XX.	The Crisis	136
XXI.	Miles Harding	143
XXII.	Searching for Rex	150

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
XXIII.	A Telegram	157
XXIV.	Found at Last	164
XXV.	Miles Harding's Story	171
XXVI.	In Winter Days	178
XXVII.	Sydney Goes on a Mysterious Expedition	185
XXVIII.	The Strange Conduct of Mrs. Fox	192
XXIX.	A Midnight Visit	199
XXX.	Sydney Frees His Mind	206
XXXI.	The Confession to the Boys	213
XXXII.	A Hard Day for the Twins	220
XXXIII.	A Queer Fish Pond Party	227
XXXIV.	Rex Rises to the Occasion	234
XXXV.	A Fistic Encounter	241
XXXVI.	Miles Breaks the News	248

TWO BOYS AND A FORTUNE

CHAPTER I

THE MAN ON THE BRIDGE

"Look there! I believe that man is actually going to try to cross the trestle."

Roy Pell pulled his sister Eva quickly toward him as he spoke, so that she could look up between the trees to the Burdock side of the railway bridge almost directly above their heads.

"Why, it's Mr. Tyler!" exclaimed Jess, who had a better view from where she sat on the log that spanned Riddle Creek. "Oh, Roy, something's sure to happen to him! He's awfully feeble."

"And there's a train almost due," added Eva. "What can he be thinking of to attempt such a thing?"

"Oh!" and Jess gave a shrill scream. "He's fallen!"

Roy said never a word. He quickly passed his fishing-line to Eva, ran nimbly across the tree trunk to the Burdock side of the creek, and then started to climb the steep bank. The girls sat there and watched him

breathlessly, now and then darting a look higher up at the spot on the trestle where the figure that had dropped still lay across the ties, as if too badly hurt to rise.

The two Pell girls and their twin brothers, Rex and Roy, had gone down to sit on the log in search of coolness on this blazing hot July afternoon. Rex had been giving vent to his disgust because he wasn't able to accept the invitation to join a jolly party of friends for a trip to Lake George and down the St. Lawrence. Cause why? Lack of funds.

"You ought to have known you couldn't go when Scott asked you, Rex," Roy had told him. "You would need at least fifty dollars for the outing. And that sum will clothe you for almost a year. And clothes with you, Rex, ought to be of sufficient importance to be considered."

"I suppose I might as well go and tell Scott about it and have it over with," Rex had replied, creasing his handsome forehead into a frown. "I dare say he'll be calling me 'Can't Have It Pell' pretty soon. It was only two months ago I asked for a bicycle and didn't get it, and there was the new pair of skates I wanted last winter."

"Don't be late for tea," Eva called out after him as he made his way to the shore.

She kept her eyes on the trim figure till it was hidden by the trees which grew thick along the road that led up to town.

"Well, if anybody in this world ought to have

money it is that good looking brother of ours," remarked Jess with a sigh. "He'd appreciate it so thoroughly. I don't wonder he's crabbed this afternoon. Just think of the chance for a good time he's had to let slip just for lack of a little money."

"Fifty dollars isn't a little money, Jess," returned Roy, casting his line.

"I know it isn't to us, but it is to most of the people we know, Scott Bowman for instance. Do you suppose we shall *ever* be rich, Roy?"

"We are rich now; at least you and Eva are, in my opinion."

"We rich?" Eva nearly slipped from her position on the log at the statement.

"Why, yes; haven't you both contented dispositions, and isn't that worth a small fortune?"

"But why have you left yourself out, Roy?" Eva wanted to know. "Surely you who never grumble, are satisfied with things."

"No, I'm not." A flash came into the boy's eyes that made him really handsome for the moment. "I'm chafing inwardly all the while at having to be idle this way when it seems there ought to be so much I could do to help along."

"But you are getting ready to do it as soon as you finish school," rejoined his sister. "And you must have a vacation, you know. Besides, think how much you do to help Sydney."

"Oh, I only do a little copying for him now and then."

He was going to add more, but at this point he caught that glimpse of the man on the trestle which brought about the interruption in the talk already described.

Roy soon emerged from the line of shade in his climb up the embankment and the scorching afternoon sun beat down on him mercilessly. But he did not cease his exertions to reach the top as quickly as possible. He knew that a train for the city would be along very soon now; he remembered the curve just beyond the bridge; the engineer could not see whether there was an obstruction in the way, until he should be too close on it to stop.

Then he thought of Mr. Tyler, and of how nobody liked him, with all his money, which he hoarded like a miser. He was probably crossing the bridge now to take the train for the city from Marley, and save the additional five cents he might have to pay if he boarded it at Burdock, which was much nearer his home.

But he was human, he was an old man; he was helpless now, doubtless overcome by the heat. And there was nobody about but Roy to prevent what might be a tragedy.

On he toiled. The loose dirt slid out from under his feet and rattled down the hillside behind him. The perspiration poured from his face in streams. What a contrast this was, he thought, to sitting there over the creek placidly fishing!

He had gained the top now and, scarcely pausing to take a long breath, he ran out over the ties till he

reached Mr. Tyler's prostrate form. He had fallen fortunately not very far from the beginning of the trestle, but he was quite unconscious and could not help himself. Roy must carry him away from his dangerous position.

He bent to his task, which was not such an arduous one as might be supposed. Mr. Tyler was little more than a bag of bones, weighing not as much as did Roy himself. The latter picked him up as carefully as he could, not daring to look down lest he should grow dizzy. Then he began to bear his burden back to *terra firma.*

He had almost reached the ground when the old man stirred and opened his eyes. He started to struggle, but Roy looked down at him and spoke sternly.

"Keep quiet, Mr. Tyler," he said, "or you will have us both over the trestle."

The miser shuddered, but he made no reply and kept perfectly still till Roy placed him on the grass in the shade of a horse chestnut tree. The boy threw himself down beside him, and began to fan himself with his straw hat. The next minute, with a shrill whistle, the train rushed by them.

"You saved my life, Roy Pell,' said Mr. Tyler after the skurrying dust raised from the ballast had settled into place. "You are a brave boy."

Roy made no reply. He was still very hot and he was thinking that his whole adventure was very much like a scene in a book.

"I ought to say 'Oh, it is nothing,' I suppose," he

reflected with a half smile. "But then that wouldn't be the truth. From the way I feel now it was a good deal."

"I've missed that train, I suppose," Mr. Tyler went on.

At this Roy wanted to laugh. It sounded so ridiculous. And yet it was quite characteristic of this singular old man. But young Pell mopped his face vigorously with his handkerchief to hide his mirth and then said, rising to his feet:

"Do you feel all right, Mr. Tyler?"

"Oh, I guess so," was the reply, and the old man started to get up too.

But he immediately fell back again and a frightened look came into his face.

CHAPTER II

IN THE MISER'S HOME

"Have you hurt yourself, Mr. Tyler?" asked Roy anxiously. "You didn't break a limb when you fell, did you?"

"No, no, it is here," and the old man put his hand up to his head.

"The sun was too hot for you," went on Roy. "You haven't got over it yet."

"I am afraid I shall never get over it, Roy Pell." The miser looked at him in a steady way that would have frightened some boys. "And I don't want to die yet, not till I have made my will. I must have a lawyer. Where is Sydney Pell, that brother of yours."

"He isn't my brother. He's a boy that father adopted when he was very young, but he's better than a good many brothers. And he's a good lawyer, too. Would you like to see him. He'll be back on the five-thirty train."

"Yes, I should like to see him if it won't be too late. What time is it now? You haven't got a watch, have you? Look at mine and tell me."

"Quarter past five, and now you ought to be taken home right away, and have a doctor."

"You think I am very bad then?" Again the frightened look came into the old man's face.

"No, of course not. Lots of people have to call the doctor when they're not going to die."

"Don't speak of dying. I'm afraid to die. See, I don't mind telling you so. And I ought to be. I haven't done very much good in the world. There isn't anybody I can think of will be sorry to have me go. That isn't the way to live, Roy Pell. You ought to be happy, so happy, because you are young, and have your life before you to make it the way it should be made."

"You have life before you, too, Mr. Tyler. You are not so very old. You're not much more than seventy."

"I'm seventy-two. But come, let me see if I can get up with your help. I want you to take me home, so you can go for Sydney. He's a good boy, you say, one I can trust?" The old man looked in Roy's face closely as the latter bent over him.

"Sydney is the best fellow that ever lived," replied Roy soberly. "He's been a staff to my mother ever since father died, and has almost taken his place to us children."

"Yes, yes. I've heard that what your father did for him years ago was like bread cast upon the waters that's coming back after many days. Let me see, how old are you?"

"Fifteen. I tell you what, Mr. Tyler. The girls are down under the bridge. Wait a minute till I call

down to them to send Syd over as soon as he comes. Then I'll go home with you and needn't leave you."

"All right. You're very good to me, Roy Pell." The miser sank back on the grass, while Roy hurried to the edge of the bluff and making a trumpet of his hands, called down:

"Eva! Jess!"

"Yes, are you all right, Roy?" came back the answer in Eva's tones.

"All O. K., but Mr. Tyler's a little done up. I'm going home with him. And he wants you to send Syd over as soon as he gets back. It's some business matter, quite important, and we may both be late for tea. Don't wait. Do you understand?"

"Yes, all right. We'll go to meet Syd now. Shall we send the doctor, too?"

Roy thought a minute.

"Yes. I think you'd better," he called down.

"I told them to send the doctor to your house," he reported to Mr. Tyler. He half expected the latter to raise a protest, but he didn't.

"All right," he said feebly. "He'll do for one of the witnesses. Now."

Roy bent down so that the old man might lean on his shoulder. He put one arm about his back to steady him, and thus supported he was able to move slowly along the cinder path beside the track.

"What did you attempt to walk across the trestle for, Mr. Tyler?" asked Roy.

"I made up my mind suddenly to go to town," was

the answer. "There wasn't time to go around by the turnpike. I thought I could get across before the train came. I've seen boys go over it."

"But you're not a boy," rejoined Roy, with a smile.

"No. I'm not a boy," and Roy could feel a shudder pass through the arm that was resting on his shoulder.

Mr. Tyler lived in a house not far from the Burdock station. An old woman did the cooking for him and went home at night. For the rest he dwelt almost like a hermit, and so far as any one knew he had not a relative in the world. But the report had gone out as it always does in such cases, that he was very rich, and now his desire to see a lawyer and make a will convinced Roy that for once rumor must be right.

"I wonder how much he's got and to whom he'll leave it?" he asked himself, but now they were within sight of the little house and the old man leaned so heavily upon him, that all his attention was centered on getting him safely to the end of their journey.

By the time this was accomplished Mr. Tyler was so completely exhausted that he dropped down on the first chair they reached.

"After you are rested a bit," said Roy, "I'll help you to get to bed."

"No, no," protested the old man; "so many people die in their beds. Go and tell Ann to get a little more for dinner to-night. You and Sydney must stay and eat it with me. It will take quite a time to have my will drawn up. You'll find her in the kitchen."

The woman was not much surprised when Roy told her of the condition in which her master had come home.

"It's what I've been expecting every day," she said. "He doesn't eat enough to keep a bird alive. I'm amazed to think he should ask you to stop to dinner. It's little enough you'll get, Master Roy, but I'll do my best."

The house was a bare looking place, furnished only with the merest necessities. No pictures were on the walls, no books on the tables; Roy wondered what the old man did to pass the time here by himself. There was not even a sofa for him to lie upon. He asked about this when he returned to the front room.

"Then you'd better come in and lie on the outside of your bed if you won't get in it," he suggested.

To this the older man acceded and allowed Roy to assist him to the adjoining apartment where he slept.

"No," he murmured, "I haven't wasted much on myself, you see. That will leave still more for those who come after me. What would you do with $500,000 if you had it, Roy Pell?"

The question came so suddenly and in such contrasted tones to the mumble in which the miser had heretofore been speaking that for the moment Roy was too startled to make reply.

"No, I'm not raving, Roy Pell," went on the old man. "There's a possibility—" he checked himself quickly—"what would you do with all that money if you had it?"

"I'd give it to my mother," answered Roy.

"Good boy, of course. I didn't think of that. You're a minor, and you're not selfish. You'd rather she would have it, eh, than that it should be held by her in trust for you? But if you got it, you'd promise to see that it was spent, and not hoarded as I have hoarded mine? You'd promise that wouldn't you?"

Roy by this time began to think that the partial sunstroke had completely unhinged Mr. Tyler's brain, already a little out of plumb.

"Oh, yes," he laughed. "There's no danger of our hoarding money. There are too many things to spend it on for that."

"Then you're squeezed a little down at your place, eh?"

"Oh, we can get along," returned Roy hastily; "but we can't do much branching out. My mother has only the income from father's insurance, and then there's the place which we own, with the taxes to pay."

The old man now relapsed into silence. He seemed to be thinking, deeply. Suddenly he started up and exclaimed:

"It must be nearly time for Sydney to be here. Won't you go outside and watch for him?"

Roy was very glad to leave the miser. He realized that perhaps it was wrong for him to feel that way, but then, believing him to be a little unbalanced, it was but natural that he should be sensible of some constraint in his presence.

"I wonder if he has got $500,000 put away somewhere?" he asked himself when he reached the little portico. "He talked exactly as if he was going to give it to me. I suppose for what I did for him on the bridge. That would be just like a story episode, so much like one that there's no chance of its coming true. But what would Rex say if it did? Ah, here comes Syd."

Roy left the porch and hurried out to the gate to meet the fellow who had been nearer and dearer to him than a brother as far back as he could remember.

"Poor old chap," he said as they met and he turned around, slipping his arm within that of the tall young lawyer, "it was a shame to make you walk all that distance in the hot sun when you must be tired out from your day in town. But there's a job at the end of the walk."

"And a cheerful brother, too," added the other. "Poor Rex! I saw him over at the station. He takes it terribly to heart that he cannot go off with the Bowmans. I wish I were rich, if only for you boys' sakes. But what's this heroic deed I hear of your doing for old Mr. Tyler? Positively, Roy, I'm proud of you."

"Oh, the train didn't come along for a good five minutes after I'd got him off the trestle. You see that takes a good deal of the 'heroic rescue' business out of the thing. But come on inside. He's been quite anxious to see you. I've made him lie down, for I think he's in a very bad way."

CHAPTER III

MR. TYLER'S WILL

"Is that you, Sydney Pell?" called out Mr. Tyler as soon as he heard footsteps in the hallway.

"Yes, Mr. Tyler. What can I do for you?" and Sydney followed Roy into the bedroom.

"You can make my will," replied the old man promptly. "That doesn't mean that I am going to die right away," he added hastily, "but I've had a warning. Why, I may have time to make two or three wills before I give up the ship."

He laughed hoarsely and started to get up. But he was weaker than he supposed, and fell back on the bed with a little gasp just as he had done out by the trestle.

"Don't exert yourself too much, Mr. Tyler," said Sydney. "I can fix the thing up for you while you are lying right here. I think I saw a bottle of ink and some paper in the other room. Roy can help me bring in that table that stands there, and then I can take down whatever you wish and you can sign it. But you will want witnesses."

"There's Ann, she can be one," responded the old man.

"And I told the girls to send a doctor up here. He can be another," put in Roy. Then he added, when all was arranged: "I suppose I had better go out."

"Yes, you can go out and watch for the doctor," said Sydney. "Now then," he went on, turning to Mr. Tyler when they were alone, and after he had written out the regulation formal preamble, "I am ready."

The miser said nothing in reply for a minute or two. He kept interlocking his wasted fingers with one another, glancing now and then out of the window, where he could see Roy pacing back and forth in front of the cottage. Finally he murmured so low that Sydney was obliged to bend forward to catch the words:

"Would you be surprised to hear that I had a vast amount of money in the deposit companies in Philadelphia?"

"No, Mr. Tyler," replied Sydney. "It has always been supposed that you were a man of wealth."

"I am, I am," muttered the miser. "I have something like half a million. And yet what good has it done me? I have hoarded it just for the sake of hoarding. It began to come to me when I was quite young. I was surprised. Some property was wanted by the city. They paid me well for it. I invested what I got and doubled it. I kept on making money till I loved it for itself alone and could not bear to part with it even on the chance of making more. So I left

it all to draw interest except what little it takes to support me in the poor way in which I live."

He paused and Sydney adjudged it proper to inquire,

"Then you have no relatives, no one dependent on you?"

"I have outlived them all," was the reply. "There was a boy, though, who was once in my employ and whom I came to think a good deal of. But he grew up and went into stocks and tried to bear the market against me. I never forgave Maurice Darley for that. And yet I loved him once. I brought him up, out of the gutter, as it were, and there was a time when he loved me. There is another brother in your family whom I see sometimes and who reminds me of him."

"Reginald — Rex, as we call him — you mean?"

"Yes, but perhaps he would not have done for me what Roy did this afternoon. You have heard of it. He risked his life for mine. He will make a good man. I am sure of it. And he is unselfish. To make him happy you must make others happy around him. Yes, I will do it. Quick, write down that I leave all my fortune unreservedly, to — what is his full name?"

"Whose full name?" Sydney had dropped his pen and sat staring at Mr. Tyler as if in a daze.

"Why your brother — Roy Pell's."

"Royal Fillmore Pell," Sydney repeated the name mechanically, still too amazed at the inference he must

draw from the question to be really conscious of what he was saying.

"Thank you. A fine name it is, and fitted to a splendid boy. Then write — but no. I had determined not to leave it to him. What is his mother's name? She must have it all outright. Then it can be used at once in the way to please Roy best. Now Mrs. Pell's full name?"

"Jessica Fillmore Pell. I suppose, as a lawyer, I ought not to express any surprise at what you are doing, but you can see how close home it comes to me, Mr. Tyler. You know the relation in which I stand to this family, with whom I am connected by no ties of blood, but who have been so good to me."

"And you have deserved it, young man. I am not leaving money to a family of whom I know nothing. Have you got that: all my fortune unreservedly to Jessica Fillmore Pell?"

"Yes, Mr. Tyler."

"Roy knows something of this, and if people think it strange or hint that I am out of my head to leave my money in this way, you can tell them what he did for me this afternoon. That ought to satisfy them. Now I want to tell you where my money is invested so that you can get at it easily, for I want you, Sydney, to be one of my executors, and I will take Dr. Martin for the other. Here he comes now. We will continue this business presently."

Roy came in with the doctor; a cheery man, whom everybody in the neighborhood liked.

"Doctor," began Mr. Tyler, before the physician could say anything, "I want you to witness my will. Roy, run out to the kitchen and get Ann to come in here."

"Ann," said Roy, appearing in the rear regions, "Mr. Tyler wants you to come out and witness his will."

"Is the poor man dying then?" exclaimed the woman, looking frightened.

"Oh, no, he only—"

"Never mind bothering Ann about that now," said the doctor presenting himself at this moment.

Roy returned to the bedroom with the physician, where he found that Mr. Tyler had decided he would have Sydney for a witness in place of Ann.

"I'd rather have a man," he explained. "I forgot that he could do it just as well as not."

Then the instrument was duly signed and witnessed.

"I am perfectly sane, you can declare, can't you, Dr. Martin?" asked the miser when the thing was done. "I don't want any mistake to be made about it."

"You need have no fear on that score."

"Dinner's ready, Mr. Tyler," announced Ann, making her appearance at this point.

"All right, you boys go out and eat it," said the old man. "The doctor wants to see me I suppose. Ann can bring me a little broth in here afterwards. And about signing that, Sydney, I want to add a

clause leaving something to Ann. I forgot about her."

Silently the two Pells went out into the dining room, and in almost silence they ate the broth which the housekeeper placed before them. Then when she had gone out Sydney said:

"You know how much Mr. Tyler is worth, Roy, do you?"

"He told me something like $500,000. I didn't know whether to believe it or not. That's a great sum of money, Sydney. I feel awfully queer about the whole thing. Does it seem all right to you that he should leave it all to mother just because of the little thing I did for him this afternoon? I don't want to seem to feel that she oughtn't to have it. But the whole thing seems so odd."

"Not nearly so queer as a great many wills that are made every day," rejoined Sydney. "But don't worry over it, Roy," he added with a laugh. "You look as if you had been convicted of some crime. Remember you haven't got the money yet, and may not have it for a great many years to come."

"It isn't my money, Syd. It's to be left to mother."

"Well, if it hadn't been for you she wouldn't have it. But by the way, you had better get home as soon as you can. I think mother is inclined to worry about you from what Jess said. I can stay with the old man as long as it is necessary."

"And I shan't say anything about that will, Syd. I'd rather you wouldn't either, just yet."

"No, it is best to keep it as quiet as we can. It seems strange that the old man should have talked so freely about it as he did."

The meal was soon finished, and the two starting to enter the bedroom, met the doctor in the doorway.

"He's in a bad way," he whispered to Sydney. "I shall come back again this evening. Come, Roy, are you going down? I'll take you along with me in the carriage."

"Yes, you'd better go, Roy," urged Sydney. "You look worn out. Tell mother I'll stay here as long as I'm wanted."

"Good-by, Mr. Tyler," said Roy, stepping into the bedroom and extending his hand to the old man.

"Good-by, Roy Pell. You have made me think better of my kind to-day. In fact I think you have made a changed man of me. Would you — would you mind coming up to see me to-morrow?"

"No, of course I wouldn't mind. I'll come. I hope you'll be better in the morning. Good-night," and Roy went off with the doctor.

"Well, Roy," said the latter, as they drove away, "you are to be congratulated. You have brought your family into a nice little inheritance if all our miserly old friend says is true."

"Perhaps it isn't," returned Roy, "so please don't congratulate me or say anything about it just yet."

Roy was so tired when he got home that he did not give very spirited answers to the questions his family showered upon him. He went to bed very shortly

and was asleep before Rex came to take his place beside him.

All in the household were locked in slumber when Sydney let himself in with his key about eleven. He did not retire. He went into the library, got out some law books, and sitting down at the table, appeared as if about to do some work.

But he did not pick up the pen. He sat there, his head sunk on his chest, with a look of misery on his face that was pitiable to see.

CHAPTER IV

THE TWIN BROTHERS

THE Pells breakfasted early so that Sydney might catch the 7:30 express for the city. On the morning following the events narrated in the preceding chapter the entire family were gathered at the table with the exception of Rex, who was invariably late, and Sydney himself.

"It's very strange," remarked Mrs. Pell. "He is always on time. He can barely catch his train now. I wish you, Roy, would run up to his room and see what is the matter. He may be ill."

Roy soon ascended the two flights of stairs to the apartment with the dormer window that had always been Syd's. The door was open and the room was empty. The bed had been slept in, but the suit Syd had worn the day before was not about. He had evidently dressed and gone.

"I wonder if he can be up at Mr. Tyler's?" thought Roy.

He returned to the dining room with his report.

"It is very odd," remarked Mrs. Pell. "It is not like Sydney to go off in that way, but he will explain when he comes home to-night. He may have

been obliged to go to town at seven on business for Mr. Tyler."

"That's so; what did the old gentleman want with Syd," asked Jessie, turning to Roy. "You were so sleepy when you came home last night that you didn't half satisfy our curiosity."

"He wanted him to make his will," answered Roy.

"And did he?" went on Jess.

"Yes. I say, mother, hadn't I better go and stir up Rex? I'm afraid he's gone off to sleep again."

"There, he's coming now. I hear his step on the stairs, so you just sit still and answer my questions. I'm not half through yet," and Jess checked off on her fingers the two queries to which she had already had responses. "Now then, is he as rich as we all thought him?"

"Richer. Good afternoon to you, Rex. Better late than never. I'm going to keep you company, by taking a second cup of coffee. Mother, may I, please?"

"Royal Pell, what is the matter with you?" exclaimed Jess. "You haven't been like the same fellow since you climbed up to that trestle yesterday afternoon. You seem to be trying to keep something back. Don't you notice it, mother?"

"I have," put in Rex, before Mrs. Pell could speak. "I couldn't get a word out of him before he went to sleep last night. One would think he'd had a trouble like mine to bear," and Rex sighed with the air of a martyr.

Roy glanced over at him quickly. What would this luxury loving brother of his say if he only knew! But Roy did not dare tell yet. Mr. Tyler might live for years, and have ample opportunity to change his mind about his will. Yes, it was better to keep the matter to himself as long as he could.

"What's queer about me?" he said now.

"Why, you're giving such short answers to our questions about the old miser," returned Jess promptly. "As a rule you'd tell us all we wanted to know without our having to draw it out as if we were pulling teeth."

"Well, what is it you want to know?"

"Oh, all about your experience over at Mr. Tyler's. The people up in the town will hear about your being there and will expect us to know all the details. It is quite an event for a queer old character like the Burdock miser to make a will."

"But people when they make their wills don't usually tell everybody in the house what they put into them. It's a sort of confidential matter, don't you understand?"

"I'll wager you know all about it, Roy," broke in Rex suddenly, dropping the biscuit he was buttering and staring at his brother fixedly for a moment. "I shouldn't be surprised if the old fellow had made you his heir for what you did for him."

"Well, if he did," answered Roy with a smile, "it wouldn't enable you to take that trip to Canada, as he isn't dead yet and may live to be ninety."

"He's just the kind that do hang on," remarked Jess. "People that nobody seems to care about generally do."

"That reminds me, mother," added Rex, "if I don't go on this trip there'll be a lot of money saved. Can't I have some of it spent for a new tennis suit? I need one badly."

Mrs. Pell smiled, a little sadly though.

"My dear boy," she rejoined, "there is your patent method of manufacturing money again. You conceive a desire for something very expensive, then when you give that up and select something much cheaper, you imagine that you have saved more than enough to pay for it."

"It's a thundering grind to be decently poor any way." Rex pushed back his chair suddenly, his brow clouded with a frown as it had been the afternoon before down on the log.

"'Decently poor!' What do you mean by that, Rex?" asked Eva.

"Oh, to have the taste and wish for nice things and the privilege of going with nice people who own them, and yet not be able to have them yourself. I sometimes wish I was like black Pete. He doesn't know any better than to be contented if he makes a dollar or two a week."

"Oh, Reggie, Reggie!" murmured Mrs. Pell sadly.

This one of her boys caused her more anxiety than all the other children combined. He was so proud,

so aspiring, and yet he had not half the ability of Roy, who was rather overshadowed by the other's dashing, winning manner. For Rex could be charming when he so minded.

He went out on the side piazza now and began to shy strawberries at two of the puppies. The berries had just been picked and left by the cook on the window sill for the girls to hull.

"Rex," exclaimed Roy severely, coming out upon him suddenly. "Aren't you ashamed to use those berries in that way?"

Roy hated waste above all things.

Rex checked the toss he was about to make, and transferred the berry to his mouth instead.

"Has your majesty any objections to that disposition of the fruit?" he asked with an assumption of the courtliness that became him so well.

"Well, it's a legitimate disposition at any rate," returned Roy. Then he went out to the barn to feed the chickens and look after the cow, for the Pells kept no hired man. The boys attended to the kitchen garden — at least Roy did most of it, and there had been no horses kept by the family since shortly after Mr. Pell's death.

This was another of Rex's trials.

"Think of living in the country without a horse!" he would exclaim. "And then to have the stable on the place into the bargain! It's enough to make the horse we haven't got laugh."

To be sure he had plenty of rides. The Bowmans

who came down to Marley for the summer, were very fond of him, and nearly every day during the summer Scott took him out in his cart.

But Rex sighed to return this hospitality. All of his friends were glad to come down to the Pellery, as Rex called it, for Mrs. Pell was a great favorite and the young people were lively and bright. Rex fretted, however, because he had no "attractions" to offer them.

He was feeling particularly gloomy this morning. Having exhausted himself in regretting the good time he would lose in not being able to go with the Bowmans, he had taken to lamenting his condition here in Marley during vacation with Scott away. He was not so fond of reading as was Roy, and without plenty of congenial society, he was apt to find that time hung heavy on his hands.

Scott had gone to Philadelphia this morning to make some purchases for his journey. He would not be back till afternoon. Rex had not yet planned what to do with himself in the meantime.

"Where are you going?" he called out presently, when he saw Roy walking down toward the gate.

"Over to Mr. Tyler's to see how he is. Want to come?"

"I believe I do," answered Rex slowly. "Hold on a minute till I get my cap."

Roy was rather surprised that his brother should wish to go. He wondered just how Mr. Tyler would like his bringing him. Then he remembered what the

miser had said about Rex reminding him somewhat of Maurice Darley and thought perhaps he might be glad to see him on this account.

It was cooler than it had been the previous day. The country about Marley and Burdock was beautiful, extremely rolling and rich in vegetation, so the walk was a pleasant one.

"Say, did Mr. Tyler really have Syd make his will last night?" asked Rex as they were crossing the covered bridge over the creek.

"Yes," answered Roy.

"Did he have much to leave?" went on Rex, stooping down as they emerged on the road again, to pluck a tall blade of grass which he began to munch between his white teeth.

"About half a million." Roy thought he might as well tell this. He knew that if he tried to evade the question his brother would be apt to think he was keeping something back.

"What?" Rex stopped stock still in the road to utter the exclamation. "That old bag of bones worth half a million dollars! Nonsense."

"I think it's more likely he should be worth that amount," returned Roy, "than the Bowmans, for instance, who seem to spend their income right up to the handle. You know everybody has always thought Mr. Tyler had money."

"I know they have, but such a sum as that!"

Rex walked on again, knitting his brows in thought. There was silence between the boys while they as-

cended the hill on the opposite side of the creek. Then as they reached the top, Rex was about to ask another question when Roy clutched his arm suddenly.

"Look there," he cried. "Isn't that undertaker Green's wagon in front of the house? Mr. Tyler must be dead!"

CHAPTER V

BREAKING THE NEWS

"GREAT Cæsar, Roy! What's come over you?"

Rex was staring in amazement at his brother, who had turned quite white at the sight of the undertaker's wagon standing in front of the miser's home. He had halted and gone off to one side of the road to lean against a tree, where he stood now, mopping his face with his handkerchief.

"I hadn't any idea he would die so soon," he said. "It seems like an awful shock, although I do remember that Dr. Martin said he was in a pretty bad way. And he asked me to come and see him to-day; I mean Mr. Tyler did. I wonder when he died."

"What luck for his heirs," remarked Rex.

"Don't!" cried Roy, starting forward as if to place his hand over his brother's mouth. "You don't know what you're saying."

"Well, I suppose it was a little rough when the old man's scarcely cold perhaps. I say, aren't you going on? We can find out just when he died, you know."

Mechanically Roy followed his brother, his eyes still fixed on that black wagon. He could not realize it yet. Mr. Tyler dead so soon after making that

will which left Mrs. Pell all his money. No more poverty for them. The stable need no longer be empty and —

Roy checked these thoughts with a half suppressed exclamation of disgust. It seemed sacrilegious to be speculating in this fashion on the gain from the death of the old man who had been so fond of life, for all he had made such poor use of it.

They were now close enough to the cottage to see that the doctor's carriage stood there just behind the ominous vehicle belonging to Mr. Green. The doctor himself was coming out of the house.

Seeing the boys he halted till they came up with him.

"Oh, doctor, when did it happen?" asked Roy.

"Last night about ten," was the answer. "Didn't Sydney tell you?"

"No, I haven't seen Syd since I left him here yesterday. Is he here now?"

"No. He is very busy in town seeing about the arrangements there. You know he is one of the executors. Things take queer turns in this world of ours, don't they? You little thought at this time yesterday morning that before twenty-four hours had passed you would be the means of bringing a great fortune into the family. But good-by. I must hurry off to do what I can for the living now."

"There is nothing that I can do for him, is there?" Roy stepped apart from his brother and closer to the doctor to ask the question.

"No, my boy," was the answer. "Nothing now. You have obeyed his last request of you. It is not your fault that you are too late."

The physician drove off, leaving the two boys standing in the road in front of the silent cottage, for the undertaker was carrying on his work noiselessly.

"Roy," said Rex suddenly, placing a hand on each of his brother's shoulders, and looking him squarely in the face, "what did Dr. Martin mean by what he said just now about your being the means of bringing a fortune into the family?"

"Don't — don't ask anything about it just here. Come, let's hurry off toward home. I'll tell you on the way."

Roy slipped his arm through his brother's and led him off down the hill.

"Now then," said Rex impatiently when they had reached the Marley turnpike again, "you must tell me. Did Mr. Tyler leave you any money for what you did for him yesterday?"

"No," replied Roy, in a kind of burst, "but he left his whole fortune to mother."

Rex did not stop and throw up his hands as Roy had half expected he would do. He came closer to his brother and suddenly passed one arm about his neck as they walked on together and drew him close to him.

"Oh, Roy," he said, "we owe all this to you."

Then he walked off to the side of the road and

dropped down on the grass. Roy came over to take his place beside him.

"I didn't want to say anything about it before," he explained. "It might have been years before we came into the money. And now it may not be nearly so much as I said. We only have old Mr. Tyler's word for it, but both Syd and Dr. Martin seemed to think he was telling the truth."

"Does mother know?" asked Rex in a low voice. He seemed to be quite changed since he had heard the wonderful news. His manner had become quiet, subdued, more like Roy's.

"No, nobody knows but you, and Syd and Dr. Martin."

"But you will tell mother as soon as you get back?"

"Yes, I suppose I had better."

"I can't realize it yet, Roy. Half a million! That's five hundred thousand dollars. And now we live on an income of about two thousand!"

Rex brought his eyes down from the sky where he had been allowing them to soar, and fixed them on his last summer's tan shoes. They were whole yet, but had lost their freshness. He could have new ones now, he reflected, without waiting for these old ones to wear out.

"How did he come to do it, Roy?" he went on. "Hasn't he any relatives, or anybody of his own?"

"I don't know. Syd can tell you more about it than I can. Come, we had better be getting home."

The boys rose and resumed their walk. Presently Rex remarked:

"When shall we get hold of the money, do you suppose, Roy?"

"I don't know. Don't talk about it in that way. It seems awful."

"Why, Roy, one would think you wished we hadn't got it. What makes you act so queer about the thing?"

"Because the thing itself seems queer, I suppose."

"You are not sorry about it, are you? You almost act so."

"Oh, no, I'm not sorry, but I can't seem to realize it yet."

"Well, I can, now I've had a little chance to get used to it. I can realize that it means a new tennis suit for me, unlimited pairs of shoes, horses and carriages and perhaps my trip to Canada with the Bowmans."

"Rex, don't go on in that strain with the man still unburied. If you only knew how it sounds."

Reginald looked a little abashed, and as they reached a fork in the road just then, announced that he was going up in the town to see his friend Charlie Minturn.

"Don't tell him about this," Roy begged.

"What do you take me for?" returned Rex in his most dignified manner. He strode on up the hill, his head thrown back, his chin the least bit elevated in the air.

"I'm afraid for Reggie," murmured Roy as he kept on toward the Pellery. "Poverty didn't suit him at all, but it seems to me riches are going to suit him too well."

The girls were hulling the strawberries on the side porch when he reached the house.

"Where's mother?" he asked as he came up and sat down at their feet.

"Gone to market," replied Eva.

"Where have you and Rex been?" inquired Jess. "I saw you crossing the bridge together. I thought the Crawfords were away. There's nobody else you'd be likely to go and see over in Burdock."

"There's Mr. Tyler," replied Roy. "He asked me to go up and see him to-day, but I was too late. He's dead."

"Dead! Oh, Roy!"

Both girls uttered the exclamation. Death almost always horrifies. They had Roy tell them in detail all about the talk he had had with the miser the previous afternoon. But he said nothing about the will. He thought his mother ought to know first.

"There come mother and Rex now!" exclaimed Jess presently.

"I suppose he's told her," thought Roy.

This was the case. There was a flush in Mrs. Pell's cheeks as she came up, and Rex exclaimed as soon as he was within speaking distance: "Mother knows. Have you told the girls yet, Roy?"

A look of annoyance crossed Mrs. Pell's face, but

before either she or Roy could say anything, Jess sprang to her feet, nearly upsetting the bowl of strawberries in the act.

"Told you what? There's been an air of mystery about you ever since you left the creek yesterday afternoon."

"Of course there has," exclaimed Rex exuberantly. "And it's something worth being mysterious about, eh, brub? What should you say, sisters mine, if I should tell you that the magic wand of fortune has been waved over the Pellery, which will transform yonder sober fowls into gallant steeds, these homely pups into expensive hounds of the hunt, and—"

"Reginald."

Rex always knew he had gone too far when his mother spoke like that. He ceased abruptly and dashed into the house. as if to cut himself off from temptation to transgress further. The next moment they heard him whistling a comic opera air up in his room.

"Mother, you tell me what all this means, won't you?" This from Jess in almost a desperate tone.

"Yes, you may as well all know now," said Mrs. Pell, sinking into a chair. "I find that half of the town seems to be aware of it already."

"It! It! Quick, mother. It isn't something awful, is it?"

"No, not awful for us my dears. It is just this. Your brother Roy touched old Mr. Tyler's heart by what he did for him yesterday, and in the will he

made last night he left all his fortune, about half a million, to me."

Both girls sat there as if stricken dumb, staring at their mother as she told them the wonderful news.

CHAPTER VI

REX GOES TO TOWN

"I'M very sorry, indeed, this came out now. It seems unfeeling to talk about it while that poor old man's body is above ground, and then the amount of the fortune he possessed may be grossly exaggerated."

This was Mrs. Pell's summary of the matter, delivered several times during that afternoon. The girls took the thing very quietly.

"I am so glad on Syd's account," Eva said though more than once. "He has always worked so hard for us."

Jess seemed dazed by the possibility of the new order of things, while Roy was disinclined to talk about it at all. Rex, however, made up for the apparent apathy of the others.

At lunch he wanted to know when they were going to move.

"Of course we don't want to go on staying in a bandbox of a place like this, when mother is a millionaire," he said.

"Only half a one," Jess corrected him with a smile.

"Well, no matter about that. I've been figuring

up on the income that we could get without touching the principal, and I make it $25,000 a year."

"Oh, Reggie, Reggie, I am afraid you are incorrigible," groaned his mother.

"Why, I don't see anything out of the way in doing a little calculating here in the privacy of our home. I don't go up and proclaim it from the housetops."

"But you may be reckoning without your host, my dear brub," interposed Jess. "What if Mr. Tyler had only a thousand in bank instead of five hundred thousand?"

"Yes; we can't know anything certain till Syd comes home to-night," added Roy.

"I can't wait for that," muttered Rex, under his breath.

He subsided for the rest of his meal, however, but as soon as he had finished went up to his room and proceeded to go through all the pockets of his different suits.

"Short by a quarter," he murmured as he finally sat down on the edge of the bed and jingled the small change he had collected. "I'll have to go to mother after all."

He glanced up at a time-table stuck in the mirror, hurriedly changed his knockabout suit for his best one, and then rushed down to the dining room where Mrs. Pell was helping Eva shell peas for dinner.

He went straight up to her and put his arm affectionately about her neck.

"Moms," he said in his winning way, "I want to run up to the city for this afternoon. I'm a quarter short to buy my ticket. Won't you please let me have it? I can pay you back out of my allowance."

"What do you want to go to the city for, Rex?"

"Oh, I can't stay here in uncertainty. I want to see Syd to know for sure about things. Besides, it will keep me from shocking you here if I go."

"But Sydney is sure to be very busy. You will bother him by going to the office."

"No, I won't. He never lets me bother him. Besides, I only want to see him for a minute. You know I haven't been in town since school closed. The train goes in twenty minutes, and I'll come back with Syd. Please, moms."

"All right, Rex, you may go, but remember I trust you not to annoy Sydney. You will find my purse in my top bureau drawer, left hand corner."

"You are the best mother a boy ever had." With a hasty kiss Rex was off, secured his quarter, and then with a wave of his hand toward the family, struck out across the pasture for the path that led up over the hill in a short cut to the station.

There was nobody so easy to get along with as Rex — as long as you allowed him to have his own way.

"That is a crazy notion of his, wanting to go in to town just because he can't wait till Syd comes out," remarked Roy when he heard of it. At the same

time he felt a sensation of relief to think that his impulsive brother was out of Marley and away from the temptation to disquiet the family by telling his fellow townsmen what he meant to do with their money when they came into it.

Rex meanwhile was enjoying himself hugely. He saw nobody he knew at this unusual hour of going to town, but he lay back in his seat while the breeze, created by the swift motion of the cars, rushed refreshingly past him, and built air castles of the most luxurious description.

"It must be so," he told himself, whenever the doubts suggested by Jess arose in his mind to trouble him. "Dr. Martin congratulated Roy. Everybody has known that Mr. Tyler had lots of money somewhere."

When the train reached Philadelphia, Rex hurried off to the law office where Syd had his desk. It was some distance from the station, but having spent all his money for his excursion ticket, he had none left for car fare.

"This will be the last time I'll be so short," he mused, a smile which he could not repress playing about the corners of his mouth.

Buoyed up by this reflection he did not so much mind the distance, nor the heat, which he found much more oppressive here in the city than it was in Marley. He reached Syd's place at last only to find that his brother was out and that the boy was not just sure when he would be back.

"But he'll be here before he goes to the train, won't he?" asked Rex.

"Oh yes, sure," was the reply. "His satchel is here with the books he always takes."

"I'll come back again then." Rex went out, thinking that now there was no danger of his ever having to step into the shoes of this office boy. Syd had remarked once or twice that he thought he could get him a position in a law office when he was through school.

Rex wandered along the street aimlessly for a while. If it hadn't been midsummer he might have gone over to Spruce and Walnut and called on some of his friends, but they were either at their summer homes in Marley or off traveling.

He was therefore reduced to walking to kill time, choosing the shady side and watching for any incident of city life that might divert his mind. He came to a bicycle emporium presently and stood for some time in front of it, trying to decide which wheel he should select when he came to purchase as he hoped to do very shortly now.

"That's the dandy kind," remarked a voice over his shoulder. "The Wizard motor. You can ride over all sorts of roads with it."

Rex turned and saw a fellow about a year older than himself. He had a red face and wore an outing shirt that was not as fresh as it might have been.

Rex, who was rather fastidious as to his friends, simply said "Yes," and moved on.

The fellow noticed the look which accompanied the word.

"The dude!" he muttered. "Thinks he's too good to talk with the likes o' me. I'll get even with him."

He waited an instant and then followed Rex at a distance. Presently something that he espied ahead caused him to scan the sidewalk and the street next it closely.

Then he stepped out into the roadway and picked up a piece of coal that had dropped from a passing cart. He quickened his steps and nearly caught up with Rex just as the latter was passing a Chinese laundry.

"Run for your life! Runaway team behind you!" he exclaimed suddenly, darting forward and calling out the words almost in Rex's ear. At the same instant he flung the piece of coal he had picked up straight into the window of the Chinese laundry.

There was a crash of glass and Rex, connecting the sound with the warning he had received, immediately took to his heels.

"There he goes!" called out the red faced youth to the Chinaman who promptly appeared in the door of his shop.

The Celestial's almond eyes caught sight of Rex's fleeing figure. It was enough. He dropped his iron and rushed after Rex, the conscienceless hoodlum joining in the chase.

Rex, hearing no further sound to tell him that a dangerous runaway was close upon him, had just

decided to slacken his pace and turn around to investigate, when he felt a hand laid on his shoulder.

"Me got you," crowed a wheezy voice in his ear. "Now for pleecy man."

Rex was horrified to find himself in the grasp of a Chinese laundryman.

"Let go of me! What do you want?" he cried, struggling to get free.

"You breakee glass. You go to jailee. Here pleecyman now."

True enough, among the crowd that had hastily collected, was a blue-coated officer.

"Make him let me go," exclaimed Rex, appealing to the representative of the law. "I didn't do anything to him."

"Yes, he did," called out a bystander, whose sympathies had been awakened for the much suffering heathen. "I saw him running for all he was worth. That's pretty strong evidence, isn't it?"

The policeman appeared to think so, for he came up and caught Rex by the arm.

CHAPTER VII

REGINALD'S HUMILIATION

Rex never felt so humiliated in his life. Here he was, surrounded by a crowd, captured by a policeman and accused by a miserable Chinaman of breaking a pane of glass.

"It's all a mistake, I tell you," he cried, starting to wrest himself loose from the officer's grasp, and then suddenly remaining passive as he reflected that this was undignified.

"What did you run for then!" questioned the policeman.

"Because he told me to — the fellow with the red face," and Rex looked around in the throng to pick out the cause of his misfortune, but that individual had discreetly disappeared.

"I don't see him now," he went on.

"I guess you don't," put in the bystander who had already spoken. "Do you run every time anybody tells you to?"

"He said there was a runaway team behind me. Then I heard the glass break. He must have thrown the stone himself."

Rex tried to speak calmly, but he was boiling over

with rage at the trick which he now realized had been played upon him.

"Me wantee new glass," the Chinaman insisted. "Play money."

How fervently Rex wished at that moment that they had come into their inheritance. He would have put his hand into his pocket, drawn out a five dollar bill with a lordly air and handed it over with the words: "Take this. I didn't break the glass, but I pity the poor heathen's distress."

As it was, he had not a penny about him. It was difficult to keep up an air of bravado under these circumstances.

The crowd was growing bigger each minute. The policeman looked somewhat perplexed. He judged from Rex's appearance that he was not a hoodlum who would be likely to throw a stone at a Chinaman's window, but he admitted that he had been running, and here was a man ready to swear that he saw him throw the stone.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"Reginald Bemis Pell," replied Rex promptly. He was proud of his name, and brought it out now with a kind of flourish.

"Where do you live?" went on the officer, while the crowd pressed closer to hear the replies.

"At Marley."

"You don't look like a boy who would break windows for the fun of it."

"Of course I wouldn't, and when my brother hears

of this outrage he'll raise a big fuss over it. He's a lawyer and knows how to do it."

Rex didn't feel a bit humorous when he made this assertion, but there was something in it that struck the crowd as very funny. A good many laughed, and the policeman tried to repress a smile.

"Where is this brother of yours?"

"Right here in the city," and Rex gave the address.

"That's not far," said the officer. "We'll go round there and see if you have told us a straight story. Come along, John," he added to the laundryman.

Rex glowed with a sense of triumph for a minute, and then began to reflect on what Syd would say at seeing him appear in such company — with a police officer and a Chinaman. And there was the crowd that strung on behind as the three moved off!

"I wish I'd stayed at home," groaned poor Rex to himself.

However, he tried to take some comfort from the fact that the policeman's arm was not on his shoulder. People they passed might think it was the Chinaman who was under arrest. Then he felt that he ought to be glad that it was midsummer, with no chance of his meeting any of his friends.

He was trying to decide what he should do in case Syd had not come back by the time they reached the office, when just as they turned into Chestnut Street a familiar voice cried out:

"Hello, Rex, what under the sun?"

It was Scott Bowman. He had just come out of a trunk store in time to confront the sorry procession.

Rex wished the manhole cover over which he was passing would suddenly give way and precipitate him under the sidewalk in theatrical trap door fashion. Scott was the last person in all the world whom he wished to see.

"Don't you come near me, Scott," he answered, "if you don't want to be disgraced. I'm under arrest."

The look of utter and complete amazement on young Bowman's face at hearing this did more to convince the officer he had the wrong person in custody than anything else. He allowed Rex to stop and parley with his friend.

The situation was explained in few words. Scott was a year older than Rex. His father was a city official with a salary of ten thousand a year. He was highly indignant when he heard of the outrage.

"This is monstrous," he said, and announcing who he was, demanded that Rex be instantly released.

"But I can't do that, Mr. Bowman, if that is really your name," responded the officer somewhat nettled. "Because this young gentleman happens to be a friend of yours, it doesn't make it any the less likely that he broke that window."

"'If that is really my name?'" repeated Scott, highly incensed. "You'll find out whether that is

my name or not when I report this affair to my father."

The officer smiled; so did a number in the crowd. Rex felt that his former humiliation was nothing compared to that which he was now undergoing, having caused his friend to be treated in this insulting fashion.

"Come on," said the policeman, and the line of march to Sydney's office was resumed, Scott valiantly falling into place beside Rex, vowing vengeance on the entire force of bluecoats.

"Don't stay with me, Scott," Rex implored him. "You've borne enough. I don't want to drag you down into the mire too."

"Do you suppose I'd desert a friend in a time of need like this?" returned Scott. "I'm going to take this officer's number now while I think of it.'

Scott fished a pencil out of one pocket and a railroad timetable out of the other, and glancing at the shield on the breast of the policeman made a record of the figures on it in a very conspicuous manner. But the officer did not tremble with apprehension. He simply turned to Rex and observed, "This is the place, isn't it?"

They had reached the building in which Sydney had his office.

"Yes, this is the place," replied Rex slowly. He was thinking how dreadful it would be to present himself before Syd with this crowd at his heels.

"I don't know whether he's in or not," he added.

"Will you mind going up and finding out, Scott?"

"Of course I won't. I know just where the room is and I'll bring him down in a jiffy."

The policeman motioned the crowd back and he and Rex and the patient Chinaman went into the marble corridor and waited, while the throng peered in at them from the doorway and a new one began to gather from among those who passed to and fro in the building.

"I'm glad I never knew this was going to happen to me," reflected Rex. "I'd never have known a happy day if I had."

He had no fear of going to jail. He felt that there was justice enough in the world to ward that off.

But the ignominy of his present position was torture enough to a proud spirit like his.

Ah, here was one of the elevators coming down, with Scott looking eagerly out at him. And Syd was with him.

But was it Syd, this fellow with the pallid cheeks and deep circles under the eyes? Yes, it certainly was his brother, for he stepped out ahead of Scott and came over at once to pass his arm about Rex in gesture of protection.

Reginald gave an almost unconscious sigh of relief. Within that embrace he felt that he was safe.

"Now what is all this about?" said Sydney, in his business-like tone, addressing the officer. "It seems you have arrested my brother here for breaking a

Chinaman's windows. Did you see him throw the stone?"

"No, but a gentleman did," replied the officer.

"Where's that gentleman now?"

He was not to be found. He had dropped out of the procession before it reached Chestnut Street.

"He was a bystander. He is not here now," answered the policeman. "I didn't think the boy did it myself, but he admits that he was running when the alarm was given."

"That amounts to nothing. Do you arrest everybody that runs in the street? Explain why you were running, Rex."

Rex did so, as he had already done.

"This fellow who told you that there was a runaway coming for you," went on Sydney; "had you seen him before?"

"Yes; he came up and spoke to me while I was looking in a store window at some bicycles."

"Did you answer him?"

"Yes."

"Pleasantly?"

Rex hesitated a moment.

"Well, I didn't exactly like his looks, so I said 'yes' or 'no,' I forget which now, and went on."

"This seems like a clear case of the wrong man, officer," summed up Sydney. "It was that hoodlum who broke the glass just for the sake of getting my brother into trouble. You ought to see that plainly enough. You do, don't you?"

"Yes, now. I didn't know all the story before. I beg the young gentleman's pardon. Come, John, we'll have to look elsewhere for your tormentor," and the officer took the Chinaman by the arm and walked out with him.

CHAPTER VIII

IN SYDNEY'S OFFICE

"I'M awfully sorry, Syd," began Rex, as soon as the three were left alone and had stepped into the elevator. "I never felt so disgraced in my life."

"You did nothing wrong," replied Syd, pressing his hand against his forehead for an instant as if it pained him. "But what are you doing in town?"

"I came to see you," answered Rex, and then looked at Scott, who had said that as it was so near train time he would wait and go to the station with the Pells. "But you are ill," he went on the next instant, his eyes coming back to the other's face. "What is the matter, Syd?"

"Oh, I'm all right," responded the young lawyer. He forced a smile to his lips, and turning to Scott asked when the Bowmans expected to start on their trip.

"Monday," was the reply. "It's too bad Rex can't come with us. I was counting on him. We'd have no end of fun."

"Oh, Syd," suddenly broke in Rex, "did you know that old Mr. Tyler was dead? Or did he die before you came home last night?"

A sort of spasm passed over Sydney's face, but they were just stepping out of the elevator, and neither of the boys noticed it.

"Yes; he died before I left," he answered, as they entered his rooms, which he shared with a fellow member of the bar who was now away. "But I've got some last things to attend to before I leave. You fellows make yourselves comfortable in there and I'll be ready in five minutes."

He pointed to the adjoining room, where Rex and Scott at once established themselves in the window and looked down on the busy street far below them.

"I didn't know Tyler was dead," began Scott. "I heard what Roy did for him on the bridge, though. By George, that was plucky! But by the way, what's the matter with your brother Sydney? He looks terribly. Didn't you notice it?"

"Of course I did and spoke about it. He's working too hard, I guess. I say, Scott, you won't tell anybody about my adventure this afternoon?"

"Of course I shan't; only father, to report how insulting that policeman was."

"No, let that go. I wouldn't like even your father to hear it. I feel humiliated enough that you should know about it. Say, Scott!" Rex paused suddenly. The recollection of his recent experience stung him whenever it came up in his mind. He felt that Scott must be constantly thinking of it, too. He wanted to tell him something that would banish it from his thoughts.

"Well, my boy, what is it?" rejoined Scott.

"If I tell you something, will you promise to keep it a secret till — till everybody knows it, as they will probably in a day or two?"

"Of course I will. It must be something mighty important from your mysterious air, old fellow."

"It is, awfully important." Rex's eyes were fixed on Scott's trowsers. He saw that they were a new pair, evidently purchased to be worn on the trip. What a thing it was to have money so that you could get extra things whenever you wanted them and not be obliged to wait till you could afford it! And the Pells would even be richer than the Bowmans.

Rex paused so long while he was thinking over all this that Scott broke in with, "Well, what is it? Don't keep me on the rack so long."

"Perhaps I shouldn't tell you," went on Rex; "but some people know it in Marley already, and you are my best friend, you know. Old man Tyler left his money to mother and it's something like half a million!"

"Reginald Pell!" Scott brought out these words with strong emphasis, then seized his friend's hand and wrung it heartily.

"Don't!" said Rex, seeing that Syd was coming toward them. "It seems awful to be congratulated now when the old man isn't buried yet, and — "

"What's that you're saying?" Sydney had hastened forward and laid his hand on Rex's shoulder.

Rex colored. Syd looked so very serious, and now,

as he stood there in the full glare of daylight, the signs of suffering on his face were plainly apparent.

"Syd, you are ill?" exclaimed Rex, forgetting about what he had been saying. "You ought to be at home at once."

"Never mind about me, Reggie. Tell me what you were just telling Scott."

"I didn't think it was any harm. A good many people in Marley know it now. I was telling him about — about Mr. Tyler's will."

"What about it?" Sydney's eyes were looking steadily, unsmilingly down into his brother's as he put the question.

Rex was really frightened now. He had never seen Sydney look just like this before.

"I told him about leaving his money to us on account of what Roy had done," he faltered. "I didn't —"

Sydney's eyes closed; he started to reel backwards and would have fallen had not Scott sprung forward and caught him.

"Help me ease him down in the chair, Rex," he called out.

Scarcely knowing what he was doing, Reginald took hold of his brother's other arm and between them the two boys got him down gently into a chair that stood near the window.

"He isn't dead, is he?"

Rex's voice was hardly more than a whisper as he put the awful question. Sydney certainly looked al-

most like a corpse, with his pallid face and his head hanging itself lifelessly over on one side.

It was a trying situation for the two boys. Neither of them had had the slightest experience with cases of this sort. It was so late in the afternoon that the offices around them were all empty.

"No, he is not dead, I'm sure of that," Scott replied, who, as the senior of Rex by some eleven months, felt that it was natural for the other to seem to rely upon him. "We ought to have a doctor at once, though."

"But we can't leave him that way while I go for one. Besides, I don't know where to go."

"Neither do I. Our doctor is clear at the other end of town and besides he's down at Atlantic City by this time anyway."

"It's awful, isn't it? Oh, what shall we do, Scott?"

"We might ring for an ambulance. That's the quickest way."

"Oh, we don't want to have him taken to the hospital. Come, help me get him out of that chair. It's horrible to see his head hang over like that."

"But where can we put him? There's no lounge about, is there?"

"No, but we might let him lie on the floor, on that rug yonder. See, we can take this cushion out of this chair for a pillow."

With much difficulty, for they felt that they must go about the work of transfer with the greatest care, the unconscious man was removed and placed in what

both boys considered would be an easier position for him. But when he was stretched out at their feet, the spectacle was such an ominous one that Rex almost wished that they had left him where he was.

"Don't you think we ought to throw water in his face or fan him or something?" he asked helplessly.

"I don't know what we ought to do, Rex, except I think we ought to have a doctor the first thing. I tell you! You stay here with him and I'll go down and find a drug store. They'll know where I can get a doctor there."

"All right; be as quick as you can."

Scott was off on the instant and Rex was left alone with the unconscious Sydney. His mind was filled with a multitude of thoughts in regard to the strange seizure. Was he, Reginald, responsible for it? What if he had not come to Philadelphia, would it have happened?

He tried to console himself with the reflection that the thing was bound to occur any way, and that it was providential that he and Scott were present to give aid.

Then he remembered how the attack had come on at the very moment when Sydney learned that he (Rex) had told of their inheritance from the miser, and he felt more dismal than ever.

It was very quiet in that great office building at this time of the day. The noise of the car bells and traffic that came in through the open windows from the street far below only made the stillness within

more marked. The office boy had taken the mail and gone home just before Rex and Scott arrived.

Rex glanced up at the clock. They would not be able to catch the express now. How good Scott was to stay with him. He would pay him back for it all when they came into their fortune.

But he seemed to be a long while gone. Rex left his position by Sydney and went to the window. By leaning very far out he could just see over the heavy stone still to the street below. But it was quite impossible to recognize any one at that distance.

He wriggled back till his feet touched the floor again, and then returned to take up his watch by Sydney once more. He wished that Roy was with him. Though they were twins he felt that his brother possessed twice the self reliance in emergencies that he did.

"I wonder if I ought to telegraph to mother," was his next thought.

Then he heard the door of the elevator slide back, and the next instant Scott Bowman appeared, accompanied by a short man with side whiskers and spectacles.

CHAPTER IX

THE MYSTERY ABOUT SYDNEY

THE boys stood by in anxious suspense while the doctor made his examination.

"It is utter collapse from severe mental strain," he said after a minute. "He will come around presently."

He wrote out a prescription and gave it to Scott to take out for him and then turned to Rex.

"You are Mr. Pell's brother, I believe?" he said.

"Yes," answered Rex, for the fact that there was no blood relation between them was one that very seldom recurred to the boys' minds.

"Then perhaps you will be able to assign some cause for this seizure. Was Mr. Pell excited by anything in particular when it took him?"

Rex hesitated. Remembering how Sydney had been affected by learning that he had revealed the facts about Mr. Tyler's will to Scott, he felt that he ought not to speak of the matter to any one else.

"Yes, he was excited by a — a family affair," he replied, hoping this was all he need say on the matter.

"Humph!" muttered the physician, and he not only took another critical look at Sydney's face, but favored Rex with a long stare, too.

"Will he be well enough to go down to Marley to-night?" asked the latter.

"You live out of town then?" returned the doctor. "There's no place where you could take him here in the city?"

"None, but a hotel," rejoined Rex. "And I'm sure my mother would rather have him home."

At this point Sydney stirred and opened his eyes. He looked first at the doctor, frowned deeply, and then as Rex came forward within his range of vision, he beckoned the boy to him.

Rex hurried over and knelt by his side.

"Who is that?" asked Sydney.

"It's a doctor. You fainted or something and Scott went out to get him. How do you feel?"

"Pretty weak, but ask him to step into the next room a minute. I want to speak to you."

"Doctor, will you mind waiting in the next room a minute? My brother wants to see me about something."

Rex was afraid the physician might feel offended or else object to leaving his patient, but he said, "Why, certainly," and then came over to take a close look at the young lawyer before leaving him.

As soon as he had gone Sydney put out one arm and passing it around Rex's neck, drew the boy's ear close to his mouth.

"Did I say anything while I was unconscious?" he whispered.

"No," replied Rex, mystified. "Nothing at all. But what does all this mean, Syd? What is worrying you so terribly?"

"Don't let it worry you and then it will worry me less. What time is it?"

"Half past five."

"Then we ought to catch the six o'clock train."

"But you're not strong enough to go now," objected Rex. "You're as pale as a ghost."

"Am I?" A wan smile lit up Sydney's face for an instant. "Well, then, exercise will perhaps bring some of the color back. You can call the doctor in now and we'll see what he says."

Scott arrived with the filled prescription just as Rex brought the physician back into the room. Sydney objected to lying on the floor any longer and they helped him to a chair.

"Yes, you can go home if you don't do any walking," said the doctor after another examination.

"All right, I can go down in the elevator, get a carriage from the hotel across the street and ride right up to the station. You rush down and engage one, Rex. Scott will stay here and help the doctor down with me. Then he can go along with us. Don't lose any time, Reggie."

With an immensely relieved mind Rex hurried off to execute the commission. He had really feared at one time that Sydney was going to die.

He was rallying rapidly now. When he entered the coach he took out his pocketbook and paid the doctor for his services.

"We owe you something, Scott," he added after they had started, "for what you got at the drug store."

Scott protested, but was in the end obliged to take what he had paid out.

"It's been an exciting afternoon for you fellows," remarked Sydney, and Rex could not help but notice that while his tone was light, his face was still pale and that he did not look at them while he was speaking.

"I want you to promise me one thing, though. That you will not speak of my fainting spell at home, or you either, Scott. I have a particular reason for asking that favor."

Both boys promised to respect his wishes, and then Sydney quickly changed the subject to the Bowmans' trip, asking at what hotels they were going to stop, and so on until the carriage reached the station. He seemed so much better by this time that when he met a friend on the train and took a seat with him, Rex and Scott almost forgot that he had been ill.

They found places together near by, but neither said much during the short ride. Rex felt that Scott must be thinking of how Sydney had broken in upon his revelation of their inheritance, and wondering what it could mean. He couldn't explain it, so he thought best not to broach the subject.

And as this filled so large a part of his thoughts there was nothing else he cared to talk about. After all his trip to Philadelphia had not been productive of any results. He knew no more now than when he started about the extent of Mr. Tyler's fortune.

When they reached Marley, Sydney took a hack that always waited at the station, and he and Rex rode down to the Pellery, Scott living close to the station in the other direction.

"Do you feel all right, Syd?" asked Rex during the ride.

Sydney nodded without making any reply, and soon they reached home. Rex was unusually silent during dinner. He looked up in surprised fashion when he learned that Sydney had gone off without his breakfast that morning. Sydney explained that it was due to urgent business in town. Rex wondered what the family would think if they knew about the scene at the office that afternoon.

Nobody said anything about Mr. Tyler after Sydney had admitted that he died before he left him the previous night. Rex was the one most likely to discourse on the subject, but now he had his reasons for not broaching it.

The next morning Sydney did not go to the city. He devoted himself to making arrangements for Mr. Tyler's burial. The death was published in all the Philadelphia papers, and the Pells expected that some one might come down, claiming to be a relative.

But no one appeared, and on Saturday the funeral

was held in the little house in Burdock. All the Pells were present, and a great number of people from Marley.

The news that the miser was very wealthy and had left all his money, except a small legacy to his servant, to Mrs. Pell, spread rapidly and created a great sensation.

Everybody connected it with Roy's act of rescue on the trestle, and so many spoke to him about it that he was almost afraid to show himself in public.

"What do you care?" said Jess, when he complained to her about it. "It certainly isn't a thing you are ashamed of."

"But I don't know what to say," he returned. "It sounds silly to tell them it wasn't anything, and I can't say, yes, I think it was a very brave act. So there I am."

"You poor boy. What do you do, usually?"

"Try to get around it by telling them that I'm not the heir but mother. I suppose that's kind of mean, too, for I know she hates to be spoken to about it as much as I do."

The Pells were the observed of all observers at the funeral. Eva had declared at first that she thought they ought not to go.

"We'll just make a show of ourselves," she said. "It was very unfortunate all this got out before Mr. Tyler was buried."

But Mrs. Pell announced that respect for the dead demanded their presence, so they went. Every one

remarked on the pallor of Sydney. His mother had worried over it considerably.

"You must be the first to take advantage of our altered circumstances, my dear boy," she had told him. "I want you to give up work for a while and go away for a good long rest."

"Oh, no, no!" he cried out in such terror that the poor woman was startled.

He noticed it and tried to smile as he went on:

"Of course all this business about the Tyler will has been an extra strain on me, but that will soon be off now. It is you and the children who must benefit by the money that has come so unexpectedly. You will make me, oh, so much happier, if you will not count me in on it. You will not need my help now, and my income will be abundant for my own wants."

Seeing that he felt so strongly on the matter, Mrs. Pell said no more at the time, but she often thought of that talk later and shivered as she recalled it

CHAPTER X

ROY MAKES A NEW ACQUAINTANCE

It was just a month after our story opened that July afternoon. Roy was fishing from the tree trunk over the creek again, but he was alone this time and the expression on his face was almost as discontented as Reginald's had been on that former occasion.

His float bobbed under two or three times, but he paid no attention to the fact. He was too deeply absorbed in thought. Now and then he would glance up at the trestle far above him, and something very like a sigh would pass his lips.

There was a snapping of twigs on the Marley end of the log and Roy turned his head quickly to find a young man regarding him attentively. He might have been anywhere from twenty-five to thirty. He had a small brown mustache and rather a dark complexion.

He held a small oblong box in both his hands. Roy at once recognized it as a camera and realized at the same instant that it was pointed at him.

As their eyes met, the stranger flushed slightly, but said in a pleasant voice:

"I hope you don't mind being taken?"

Roy did mind. He was in a mood just now to object to everything, but the other's voice was such an agreeable one, the glance of his eye so kindly that the boy's real self came to the surface through his temporarily baser one, and he replied:

"Oh, I s'pose not, but I haven't got the pleasant look the photographers tell you to put on. Aren't you afraid I'll break your camera?"

The answer was a quick snap and then the young man slung the camera over his shoulder and stepping out on the tree trunk slipped down to a seat beside Roy.

"You have a very cozy retreat here," he remarked, "how's the fishing?"

"I don't know. To tell the truth I wasn't thinking of my line at all and I'm almost sorry I let you take that picture. I don't see what you wanted it for any way. I hope you won't show it around much. You don't live in Marley, do you?"

"No."

"I'm glad of that."

"Why?" with a smile.

"Because nobody I know will be apt to see the picture."

"You're quite a modest young man."

"Oh, it isn't that, but I must have looked so disagreeable at that particular moment. At least I must have done so if my looks were anything like my feelings."

"No, if I remember rightly you were smiling at the

instant I pressed the button. You know you were saying something about fearing you would break the camera, and a smile usually goes with that remark."

Roy looked up quickly. The stranger was an odd one. He had a queer way of putting things. Roy began to be interested.

"Have you taken many pictures around here?"

"Quite a number. It's a very pretty place."

"Isn't it?"

"That bridge quite adds to the attractiveness of the landscape. In fact that is the reason I am here. I was coming through on the train and as we crossed, the prospect of this little valley was so tempting that I decided to stop off and explore. I am very glad I did now, for it gave me the added pleasure of meeting you."

"That sounds as though you were talking to a girl," said Roy.

"Does it? Well, as I am particularly fond of boys I suppose I may be allowed to say the same sort of things to them."

"You're fond of boys? That's queer. I didn't know any one liked boys except their mothers and now and then a girl or two."

Roy laughed a little as he added this last, and the stranger joined in heartily.

"You're very frank," he remarked; "but that's what boys usually are, and it's one of the reasons I like them. They generally say right out just what they think."

"What's another reason?"

The man with the camera hesitated an instant before replying. Then he said:

"Well, I'm going to be frank, too. Another reason I like boys is because I find them useful to me."

"Useful to you?" repeated Roy, perplexed.

"Yes, as a matter of study. You see, I write about them sometimes."

"Why, are you an author?"

Roy turned full around on the log as he put the question, his face all aglow with animation.

"I suppose that's what I must call myself even if I'm not a particularly famous one."

"Please tell me the names of some of your books. Perhaps I've read them."

The young man smiled at his companion's eagerness and mentioned a story which had been Roy's Christmas present two years before.

"Did you write that?" he exclaimed. "Why, then you are Mr. Charles Keeler!"

"Yes, I am Mr. Keeler. I suppose you are disappointed in me. Most people are when they see the people who write books they have read."

"That was a splendid story." Roy drew in a long breath before he made this reply. He was still looking at Mr. Keeler as if he could not yet quite comprehend the thing. "I'm awfully glad to meet you and I'd like to shake hands."

"With the greatest of pleasure. I'm very glad you liked my book; I know you wouldn't say so if you

didn't. That's where boys are superior to grown people. They are almost always sincere in the expression of their opinions."

"Do you know I've never seen an author before?" went on Roy, who had wound up his line and had given himself over to a full enjoyment of this unexpected opportunity. "I don't see how you do it. I hate to write compositions at school. Nearly every boy I know does. Did you?"

"Yes, when I had to write on subjects that were assigned by the teacher I used to count the lines then just the same as the rest of the fellows. But when they let me write a story I didn't mind."

"I don't see how you can. I should think you'd never know what to say next."

Mr. Keeler smiled, showing his white teeth which contrasted so strongly with the deep tan on his complexion.

"Oh, that all comes when you have your scheme arranged," he said. "But of course you have to possess a natural taste for the work. You can't suddenly decide that you would like to be an author and then study for it as you might learn to be a carpenter or a mason."

"Oh, it's like poets, then, who are 'born, not made,'" returned Roy.

"Precisely, and that being the case it comes natural to write, although there is a great deal of hard work about it."

"You said you studied boys. How do you mean?"

"Well, take yourself for example. When I saw you sitting here fishing I wanted your picture so I could look at it some day and perhaps make up a story about you."

"A story about me!" exclaimed Roy. Then he added in a sober tone, "I don't believe you could make up a more wonderful story than something that has really happened to me."

"Is that so? I remember now you said you were very much disturbed over something that you thought would make you look disagreeable."

"Yes, I came down here because I was at odds with myself and everybody else. I wonder what you'd do with a hero who was just in my position. I've half a mind to tell you all about it. You don't know who I am, so it won't matter. Do you live in Philadelphia?"

"No, in New York just at present."

"Good, then I believe I'll tell you, but you must promise you won't use it in a book unless I tell you you can."

"Here's my hand on it," and once more hands were clasped over the tree trunk.

"And you must promise, too, to believe everything I tell you. Some of it will seem pretty steep."

"Oh, well, you know, that fact is stranger than fiction, so don't worry about that."

"I won't tell you everything," began Roy, with a quick glance up at the trestle, "but first I'll have to go back a little and say that almost as far back as

I can remember we've lived in that house you can see down yonder with the peaked roof. We had only about enough money to keep us comfortable, for father died when I was a little fellow, and there were five of us children. But we had good times and I was looking forward to the future when I would be a man and Rex and I — that's my twin brother — could give mother some of the luxuries with what we should earn, for I expected that by that time Sydney would be married and have a home of his own. You're not bored listening to all this, are you? There's a more exciting part coming?"

"I never was so absorbed in a story in my life, my dear fellow. Go on, please."

"Well, over yonder, not far from the end of the trestle, lived an old man — but never mind the name. At any rate he was sort of a miser, or rather he had lots of money which he never spent and when he died he left it all to my mother."

"You've left something out I think," interrupted Mr. Keeler, and there was a smile about the corners of his mouth that caused Roy to flush deeply.

CHAPTER XI

MR. CHARLES KEELER

"WELL, why don't you go on?" asked Mr. Keeler, as Roy paused.

"You've heard something about the affair. I can see you have by the way you look. Please tell me what it was."

"Only a very little," was the reply. "As I was crossing the trestle in the train a while ago I heard a lady behind me telling a gentleman who was with her that this was the place where Roy Pell rescued the old miser. So now you see I know who you are, but I hope that won't make any difference about your telling the story. You left off in the most interesting place. It would be worse than the serials in the weekly papers, for I couldn't look forward to getting the continuation next Saturday."

Roy smiled and then said

"All right, you've promised not to use it unless I give you leave, you know. But I don't want you to think of me as a regular hero because I lugged that old man off the bridge. There would have been plenty of time for me to have run down to Burdock

and stopped the train and got help there, but I really didn't think of it."

"Oh, no, that isn't the part I'm interested in at all. What I want to know is the reason you seemed so glum over having come into a fortune. Was it much, may I inquire?"

"About half a million, but I haven't been one mite happier since we've had it. In the first place my oldest brother has been sick ever since. We don't know what's the matter with him and he won't give up his law business and go away for rest as mother wants him to. He says he has got too much to do looking after the investing of her money. Then there's Rex, he wants so many things that he can't settle on any one. He got a bicycle almost the first thing, and now he's tired of it and wants a horse, and Jess says there's no good of getting that because we ought to go to Europe and take Syd with us."

"And Eva, she wants to go to Vassar, and mother doesn't want to give her up, and the worst of it all is we've sold the place and we are going to move into the city next month, and I hate to leave Marley, although the rest all want to go. So we're all pulling different ways, and nobody a bit happy, for if he's got what he wanted he has to remember that it's what the rest didn't want. I had a fling out about the whole thing just before I left the house and I came down to grumble to the creek. Why, that's funny!"

"What's funny?" inquired Mr. Keeler, as Roy looked up with a half smile.

"Why, it's just a month ago to-day since Rex came down here to mope because we didn't have money enough to let him go on a trip to Canada, and now I've come here to do the same thing because we're come into a fortune."

"Then you don't care for the money?" remarked the author.

"Not if it's going to break up a family the way it has ours. Jess used to be awfully lively and full of fun, and now she's all the time talking about new clothes and the places she wants to go, and how she's going to have her room decorated in the new house."

"But I thought you said she wanted to go to Europe."

"So I did. That's one of the troubles. She don't know what she wants. It's one thing one minute and another the next."

"But your mother? Doesn't she have something to say about it?"

"Yes, but she's so fond of us all, she wants to do what will give us the most pleasure. And of course when we all want different things that's pretty hard to do."

"And the 'different thing' that I want is to stay right here in Marley. I'd graduate at the academy here next June, and then all my friends are here, and I like the country. Now if your hero in a story was in a fix like this what would you do with him?"

"It depends on the sort of story I was writing. If it was one with a motive, a moral, so to speak,

I'd have him give up his own desire and say he'd be perfectly willing to do what the rest wanted to do."

"But if the rest wanted to do different things? Here's Rex wanting to live in Philadelphia, and Eva thinking it would be ever so much nicer to live in Boston, and Jess divided half of the time between New York and Europe, and Sydney looking as if he'd drop into the grave right off if we didn't do something quick — what then?"

Roy spoke very earnestly, and Mr. Keeler did not smile this time. He began to pick at the bark on the tree trunk and did not reply for some little time after Roy had paused.

"I think," he said finally, "that in that case I should have had my hero try to make himself contented with whichever decision was arrived at. Half a million ought to atone for a great many drawbacks."

"Oh, I know a lot of people envy us," broke in Roy. "Charley Minturn says I ought to be the happiest fellow going. But I'm not. That's because I'm going — to leave Marley. I s'pose you think it's queer for me to tell all this to a stranger. But it's just because you are a stranger that I feel that I can do it. You can understand how that can be, can't you, Mr. Keeler?"

"Yes, perfectly. But I think you attach too much importance to your feeling for Marley. Of course you think now that you will not be contented elsewhere because you do not yet know the attractions

of other places. I remember when I was in my teens, living abroad, I thought I could not be happy anywhere but in Paris. I had been there all winter, and when spring came and we were to go to Germany I felt just as you do over leaving Marley. But when we were settled in our German home I grew to like it just as I had Paris. That is the way it is sure to be with you."

"Why, you've done me lots of good," exclaimed Roy. "I should never have thought of looking at things that way. So you've lived in Europe? Rex only wants to travel there."

"He's your twin brother, you say? Does he look like you?"

"No; only the least bit. He is the good looking member of the family. There he goes now on his wheel. Would you like to meet him?"

"Indeed I should," replied Mr. Keeler heartily. "It would seem exactly like a character out of a story."

Roy put his fingers between his lips and gave a peculiar whistle, composed of three distinct notes. Rex, who was just passing under the trestle, turned around in his saddle, and when he saw some one beside his brother on the tree trunk, he made a half circle in the road and came scudding back on his machine.

He ran this in a little distance among the trees, left it leaning against one of them and then came on foot to the edge of the creek. His bicycle suit was very

becoming to him. Roy watched Mr. Keeler's face and saw that he was favorably impressed at once.

He accomplished the introduction, mentioning the book both boys had read. Rex seemed immensely pleased at meeting the author, and put on his most charming manner.

"Won't you come over to the house, Mr. Keeler?" he said. "We can give you some lemonade and I'd like you to see the view of the trestle from our piazza."

"You are very kind," returned the young man, looking at his watch, "but I am afraid I shall not have time. I had planned to take the next train in to town. I have only about twenty minutes in which to catch it now."

"Stay to tea then and go up some time this evening," went on Rex. "I am sure our mother would be delighted to meet you, and so would the girls. Wouldn't they, Roy?"

"Yes, indeed, please stay, Mr. Keeler."

Roy would not have dared to make this request if he had been left to himself. That was the difference in character of the two brothers. One was impulsive, ready to do anything on the spur of the moment: the other cautious, shrinking sometimes. He was just as anxious as Rex to extend the hospitality of the Pellery to their new acquaintance, but felt that he had not known the other long enough to warrant him in doing so.

Mr. Keeler hesitated. He was in his element now

in the society of two boys of such contrasted temperaments, making admirable studies.

"I was going back to New York to-night," he said. "But I suppose I could put it off till morning."

"Do; then you can stay to tea at the Pellery," exclaimed Rex. "That's what we call our house. It makes it seem like a nest, you know. If you don't mind I'll mount my wheel and run on ahead to tell them you are coming, so that we can receive you in proper state."

There was no opportunity given Mr. Keeler to decline. Rex rushed ahead, mounted his wheel and was off before he could answer.

"You will stay, won't you?" asked Roy.

"With pleasure if you think it will not inconvenience your mother. That is decidedly important. You do not know but I may be some moonshiner from the Cumberland, or a bandit from Italy. My complexion certainly answers to the latter description. You see, you have only my word for who I really am."

"I guess that's good enough," laughed Roy. "How do you like Rex?"

"Immensely."

"Everybody does. I suppose we ought to be very proud of him, and we are, but then we are afraid for him at the same time. What a boy he is! See, he's hunted up our big flag and hung it from Syd's window in honor of your coming. You'll have to make a speech now."

CHAPTER XII

AN ALARMING DISCOVERY

REX come down to the gate to meet them.

"I'm sorry that mother isn't home," he said. "She's just had a telegram from Syd that takes her to town and will keep her there with him all night. Some business connected with the new house," he added with a glance at Roy.

"But the girls are home and will be delighted to receive you with fitting honors," he went on. He did not say that he had had quite a time to induce them to appear at all. He had rushed into the house in his impetuous way announcing that Roy was coming along with a young man they had met down at the creek who was a famous author and was so nice, and whom they had invited to tea.

"But we don't know him, Rex," Eva had exclaimed in considerable dismay. "You oughtn't to bring strange people to the house in that way."

"Oh, but it's just the same thing as if we did know him," and Rex went on to explain about the story he had written, which they had all read and admired.

"But is he nice and respectable himself?" Jess inquired. "You know some of these writers are hor-

ribly poor and go about with threadbare clothes. He might not be the right sort of man for us to know at all."

"Jess!" Eva exclaimed severely. "The idea of your thinking that because people are poor they can't be respectable! We shall be very glad to meet your friend, Rex," and Jess felt that she was in such disgrace that when Mr. Keeler was presented she tried to redeem herself by being excessively friendly.

And this was not difficult for her to do. He was certainly very different from what she had expected. He had neither long hair like the traditional poet, nor trousers fringed around the bottom like the literary hireling of Grub Street.

Indeed, she found him quite handsome; he dressed almost as well as Rex did, and he was a most interesting talker. And all the while she was sensible of having seen his face somewhere before.

She thought at first it might have been in a portrait painted as a frontispiece to his book. At the first opportunity she slipped off to the boys' room and looked it up. But there was no portrait there.

Finally she decided that she must have passed him in the street in the city some time and resolved to think no more about it.

Eva was pleased with the visitor too. They had a very merry supper party. The clash of opinions about what to do with their money was stilled for the time while they all listened to the very entertaining stories told by their guest.

He was, it seemed, on his way home from the oil regions of Pennsylvania whither he had gone to secure the local color for a new story. In fact he had traveled very extensively in his short life, for he was not yet thirty.

At one time he had lived among a tribe of blacks in Africa; at another been a member of a party of exiled Russians, on tramp to the mines of Siberia. He was telling of an exciting adventure he had had among the Arabs when the twinkling lights in a train crossed the trestle caused him to come to a sudden pause.

"I must be thinking of the time," he said taking out his watch, and trying to see the figures on its face by the moonlight. 'I don't want to miss the last train in to town."

"Oh, do, please," pleaded Rex. "You can stay here just as well as not. Syd won't be home and you can have his room. The last train goes in half an hour; you won't nearly have exhausted your stock of stories by then. Please stay."

"We should be very glad to have you do so, Mr. Keeler," said Eva.

"But this is trespassing altogether too much on your hospitality," he returned. "Besides, you scarcely know me and I didn't come prepared. I left Philadelphia this morning, meaning to be back there by night."

"Oh, we'll fix you out," said Rex with an air of finality, "so go on with your Arab story."

It was most comfortable on that porch with its southern exposure, the fireflies dancing to the chirp of the crickets, the span of the railroad trestle looking like a fairy bridge against the background of the sky. Mr. Keeler decided to stay.

Roy wondered what the others would think if they knew that their guest was aware of what had recently befallen the family. He should most decidedly not have told all he had if he had foreseen what was coming.

At ten o'clock Eva suggested that Mr. Keeler was probably tired from his journey, so the boys went up stairs with him.

"I'll come down and lock up," Roy called back to his sisters.

When he returned in a few minutes, leaving Rex talking bicycle with their guest, he found the girls standing in the library, over a large book which they had open on the table before them.

"Look there!" exclaimed Jess, almost in a tragic tone, just as he entered.

She was pointing at something in the upper left hand corner of the page. Eva started as she looked at it and then turned a frightened face toward Roy.

"Roy, come here," she said.

"Why, what's the matter with you girls?" he exclaimed. "You look as if you'd each seen a ghost."

"It's worse than that!" answered Jess in a sepulchral tone. "Look here."

She pointed to the spot on which Eva's gaze had been riveted.

"Why, it's Mr. Keeler's picture!" exclaimed Roy.

"Read what it says underneath," went on Jess in the same tone.

Roy let his eyes drop to the printed lines beneath the portrait, which was one of six which adorned the page. This is what he read:

MARTIN BLAKESLEY,

Alias "Gentleman George," "Lancelot Harker," etc., Confidence Man.

"What book is this?" asked Roy.

His voice was hard. He hardly recognized it himself when he heard it.

"'Noted Criminals of the United States,'" replied Jess. "Syd brought it home last week to look up something or other he wanted to use in a case. I was glancing through it this morning and saw this picture then. I knew I'd seen Mr. Keeler somewhere before as soon as I laid eyes on him this afternoon."

"Perhaps it's only somebody that looks like him," said Eva faintly. "He has a larger mustache than that now."

"It's had plenty of time to grow," rejoined Jess significantly. "This book was published two or three years ago. See, here is his history. No. 131," and she began to look over the pages till she came to the

paragraphs of description accompanying the portrait.

The three heads bent over the page eagerly, while Roy, in a low voice, read the facts about No. 131. He had been in jail twice, it seemed, his last term having expired, as Roy figured, some four months previous. He was noted for his sauve manners and the facility with which he imposed on strangers.

"That's the man," murmured Jess. "What are we going to do?"

Eva stepped back to the sofa and sank down upon it as if every bit of strength had gone away from her.

"It doesn't seem possible," was all Roy could say for the moment.

Then he turned back to the picture and studied it long and intently. Meanwhile the steady murmur of voices could be heard from above. Rex was showing Mr. Keeler the treasures in their room.

"I had better go up and ask him to leave," then said Roy suddenly.

"Oh, no, no, that will precipitate a quarrel," exclaimed Jess. "He may murder us all."

"What do you want me to do then?" asked Roy.

"I don't see that you can do anything except sit up with Eva and me down here till morning. I'm sure I should never sleep a wink if I went to bed."

"I'm hoping yet there'll be some way to prove we are mistaken in thinking him the same person," put in Eva.

"You might take this book up, Roy, and show

it to him, then if he didn't flush when he saw this picture we'd know it was all right."

"And if it wasn't, poor Roy might be stabbed where he stood," added Jess cheerfully. "I tell you! we might cry fire and scare him out that way."

"Don't be silly, Jess," Roy admonished her, and then he returned once more to the study of the face of the criminal.

There was a sudden crash up stairs. Jess uttered a half stifled scream.

"Oh, Roy," she cried, "do go and see! He may have killed poor Rex!"

CHAPTER XIII

DISCUSSION OF WAYS AND MEANS

Roy bounded up the stairway two steps at a time. He was conscious that both his sisters had walked to the foot of it and were looking after him fearfully. Then he heard Rex's voice. Evidently his brother was not hurt.

"Oh, it didn't matter in the least," Rex was saying. "It was an old thing, we shouldn't have taken it with us to the new house."

He and Mr. Keeler were bending over a heap of fragments on the floor. Roy stepped into the room and saw that they had once been the clock that stood on a bracket near the foot of the bed.

"I was reaching up to get that wasp's nest we stuck behind it," Rex explained. "My coat sleeve caught on the clock and pulled the whole thing over."

Roy gave a sigh of relief and then almost smiled as he recalled what he and his sisters had thought for a minute had really happened. He bent down and helped the others to pick up the pieces.

"I think this should be a warning to me to go to bed at once," said Mr. Keeler with a laugh. "Good

night, boys, I shall be on hand for eight o'clock breakfast."

He went out into the hall and up the stairs to the third floor, where Roy had already lighted the lamp for him in Syd's room.

"An awfully nice fellow, isn't he, Roy?" remarked Rex, rolling the fragments of the clock up in an old newspaper.

Roy did not make any reply. He had sat down on a chair by the bureau, on which he was resting his elbow. His eyes were fixed thoughtfully on the book rack opposite in which stood the volume of which Mr. Keeler was the author.

"Rex," he said suddenly, "come on downstairs."

"I've got to go down any way with this rubbish. But what's come over you, Roy? You look as sober as a judge in a criminal case."

"I'll show you in the library," was all Roy's reply, then recollecting that the girls would be anxious to hear his report, he hurried out and down the stairs.

Eva and Jess were still standing by the newel post.

"Well?" they asked in a breath.

"It was only the old clock Rex knocked down. Mr. Keeler has gone up to bed."

"Did you tell Rex?"

"No, not yet. Here he comes now."

Eva went out and showed her brother where to deposit the contents of the newspaper. Then she brought him back into the library and pointed out the portrait of Martin Blakesley.

Rex understood at once what it meant, for he had been looking at the book.

"Whew!" he brought out this low whistle and then glanced from one to the other of his companions.

"You think it is the same man then?" said Roy.

"It looks exactly like him, and I suppose it would be as easy for him to take the name Keeler as any other alias."

"But there is a Charles Keeler," went on Roy, "I didn't know these men would dare masquerade around the country as such famous people. They would be sure to be found out."

"What are you going to do about it?" asked Rex.

It was characteristic of him that, though he had himself invited Keeler to the house, he was now putting all the responsibility on his brother.

"Let's sit down and talk it over calmly," replied Roy. "I've been thinking the thing over and I can't see what harm it can do to let Mr. Keeler stay."

"What, a confidence man!" exclaimed Rex and Jess in a breath.

"He may have reformed," continued Roy. "He didn't plan deliberately to come to this house, nothing he has said or done since he has been here has made us suspect him of being anything else than what he claimed to be."

"But if he has reformed what would he be going around pretending to be what he wasn't for?" interrupted Jess. "You don't suppose that Martin

Blakesley and Charles Keeler, the author, are one and the same person, do you?"

Roy did not answer for a minute. He had plainly not thought of this side of the matter.

"Ugh! it makes me creep," went on Jess, "to feel that a man who has been in state's prison twice is in this very house and going to stay here all night. I'm going to stay up until morning. I think I'll sit down here and read the lives of these criminals. It will be an appropriate occupation."

"You girls needn't stay up at all," said Rex. "Roy and I will stand guard."

"Oh, I couldn't sleep if I went to bed," declared Jess. "I don't know as I can ever sleep again so long as we are in this house. Think how he must know all the ins and outs of it by this time!"

"How silly you talk, Jess," interposed Eva. "One would think to hear you that Mr. Keeler was a common burglar. As Roy says, he didn't plan to come here, and like as not he'll go away in the morning without having disturbed us in the least."

"You're standing up for him, are you, Eva? Well, I thought his good looks were making an impression on you."

"Jessie, you have no right to talk in that way. I'm not standing up for him at all. I'm only trying to get you to look at the facts of the case in a sensible way."

"But there's nothing sensible in inviting a jail bird to the house, and having him stay all night. It isn't

the sort of thing you can prepare yourself to bear up under in dignified fashion."

"Shall I go up to town and get the constable to come down and arrest him?" asked Rex.

"You can't do that!" returned Roy promptly. "He hasn't committed any crime."

"But if we wait till he does commit one, it will be like locking the stable door after the horse has been stolen."

"You might go over to the Burtons', Roy, and get Will to come and stay with us," Eva suggested.

"And rouse them up at this hour of the night? It's getting on to be eleven o'clock. And it would be a pretty reason to give, wouldn't it: 'If you please, Mr. Burton, we invited a convict to spend the night with us, and now we're afraid.'"

Eva couldn't resist smiling at Roy's way of putting it.

Rex yawned heavily.

"I'm awfully sleepy," he said.

"Yes; and you and Rex were the ones who were to stand guard," Jess reminded him promptly.

"Well, I'm beginning to agree with Eva now," Rex returned. "I haven't an idea that man intends to harm any of us. Perhaps there is some mistake after all and he isn't Martin Blakesley, only somebody that looks like him."

"I don't go to bed on any such uncertainty as that," declared Jess.

"What would we do if we stayed up and we heard

him coming down stairs to burglarize the house?" Rex wanted to know.

"If you and Roy weren't shaking in your boots too much to take aim you might bring him to a halt by pointing Syd's pistol at his head."

"I suppose we could ask him to wait first till we ran up to Syd's bureau drawer and got it," retorted Rex with fine irony.

"Mercy sakes! There he is right in the room with the only weapon we've got in the house!" and Jess looked really terrified now. "Why didn't one of you think to take it out?"

"Why didn't you think to tell us who Mr. Keeler was before we asked him to stay all night?" Eva retorted. "You said you knew all the time you had seen him somewhere before."

"The boys had no business to pick up a stranger and bring him to the house in this way," Jess replied. "What do you suppose mother will say when we tell her?"

"You needn't tell her," said Rex.

"Needn't tell her!" exclaimed Jess. "When she finds half the silver gone and Syd's pistol missing I suppose we can say that the cat carried them off."

"Well, I didn't pick the fellow up," affirmed Rex. "It was Roy. He called to me to come and meet him."

"And you invited him to the house," Roy couldn't resist adding.

"Come," interposed Eva, "stop quarreling over

what is past and decide what we must do in the present. For my part I can't think we are in any personal danger. If the man up stairs is the same one described in the book he has evidently reformed."

"But remember what it says about his smooth ways," interjected Jess. "That is just where he has made his reputation, by his easy way of crawling into people's confidence."

"I tell you what to do," said Roy. "You and Rex, Eva, go up to bed. Jess and I will stay up all night and stand watch."

"But what good will that do you if you haven't any weapons?" Rex wanted to know.

"We can run, any way," answered Jess. "That will be better than lying still to be murdered in our beds."

After some further discussion the matter was settled in this way.

CHAPTER XIV

WHAT HAPPENED AT MIDNIGHT

When Rex and Eva had gone up stairs, and Jess and Roy were left to themselves in the parlor, the brother and sister looked at each other rather soberly for the first few minutes.

"Are you very sleepy, Roy?" asked Jess presently.

She sat by the table still, with that book about criminals open before her, but she had not looked at it for some time now.

"No, not a bit. Shall I read you something? There's that book of Mark Twain's we haven't finished yet."

"I couldn't put my mind to listen to anything. I never was so nervous in my life. And I'm getting worse."

"There's really nothing to be nervous about, Jess. I have no doubt that Mr. Keeler is in bed sound asleep by this time, with no thought of burglarizing the house."

"I wish I could think so, but I can't."

"Think of something else then. When are we going to leave Marley?"

"The first of September. The new house is a beauty. You haven't seen it yet, have you?"

"No, and I don't know as I ever want to."

"Oh come, Roy, it is ridiculous your being so set on staying in Marley. We can come out here in the summer perhaps, although I'd prefer to go abroad."

"It must have been nice to live in Europe for a while as Mr. Keeler did, you get so well acquainted with the people."

"I wonder if they got well acquainted with him," remarked Jess significantly.

"Oh, I forgot," returned Roy, and then he remembered what Mr. Keeler had said to him down by the creek about trying to make himself contented with whatever was for the good of the greatest number.

It could not be possible that a man who could give such excellent advice had a record behind him like Martin Blakesley.

"Then you don't want me to read to you," Roy added. "What shall we do then? What do you say to a game of Authors?"

"All right. Mr. Keeler isn't represented, so I guess I can stand it."

Roy took the cards from the drawer of the bookcase and they began to play. But Jess's thoughts wandered and Roy was obliged to remind her to take her turn many times.

Suddenly she held up a finger hushing him to silence.

"Don't you hear something?" she asked in a tremulous whisper.

"Nothing but the crickets outside and the splash of the water over the dam," he replied.

"No, it's something in the house up stairs. Hear it now; like the creaking of a board."

Roy did hear it this time plainly.

"It's Rex or Eva," he said reassuringly.

"No, it isn't. See, it's nearly midnight. They were asleep long ago. Oh, Roy, that man may stop on the way down and murder them both."

Jess had risen and stood there, staring toward the doorway into the hall, her eyes filled with terror.

Roy rose, too. He realized that the noise was not likely to be made by his brother or sister, and the servant slept in the rear of the house and always used the back stairs. He had often wondered whether he would be brave in a time of real danger as fellows in the books he read were. He did not feel by any means comfortable now. But he was not actually terrified.

"I'll go up and see what it is, Jess," he said, and started toward the door.

But his sister flung herself upon him, the tears starting from her eyes.

"Don't leave me or I shall die," she moaned.

She drew him back toward a sofa in the far corner of the room, and held him tightly by the wrist.

The noise from above drew nearer. They made it out to be the creaking of the stairs.

Jess was trembling frightfully. Roy could almost hear her teeth chatter. He wished that he could think of something to say to make her feel less terrified. He was sure if he had been a boy in a book he could have thought of something.

He determined to ask Mr. Keeler in the morning what would be the proper thing under the circumstances. Then he laughed out half hysterically as he realized that it would hardly be the thing to mention the matter to Mr. Keeler.

Jess heard the laugh and it frightened her more than ever. She thought Roy was more terrified even than she and was losing control of himself.

Nearer and nearer came the creak of descending footsteps. Roy started to go to the door. He felt that he could not remain in suspense an instant longer.

But Jess held him back.

"Don't, Roy," she whispered. "He will kill you."

And at that instant a man's form passed the doorway.

It was Mr. Keeler. He had on his trousers, shirt and shoes, but nothing else. His hair was all rumpled and one hand was stretched out in front of him as though he had been feeling his way.

He halted for an instant at the foot of the stairs and turned his face toward the library. Then Roy saw that his eyes were closed.

"He's walking in his sleep," he whispered to Jess. "I must go and wake him or he may do himself some damage."

"Let him alone. He may go out and then we can lock the door against him."

"Jess, would you be as cruel as that?"

"Perhaps he isn't asleep. He may be only shamming."

"I'm going to find out at any rate. There, he's fumbling with the lock. You'd better take the opportunity to go up stairs."

Jess still held on to her brother's wrist, but now she suffered herself to be led across the floor to the hall, reaching which, she let go and sped up stairs. Roy turned at once and laid his hand on the shoulder of their guest.

Some way his fears and suspicions of the man had all departed.

"Mr. Keeler," he said, in a firm tone.

The other left off his working with the lock and a tremor ran through him.

Roy slipped his hand down till it rested under the other's elbow.

"Come into the library and sit down a moment," he said gently.

"Where am I? What have I been doing?"

Roy knew that the man was awake now.

"You have been walking in your sleep," he replied.

"I beg your pardon. Did you dress and come down after me?"

"Oh, no, I haven't been to bed yet."

Roy flushed as he made this answer, and at this

moment the clock on the mantel chimed out twelve strokes.

"Are you in the habit of sitting up till midnight?" asked Mr. Keeler. "I suppose—"

He paused suddenly. His gaze had fallen on that book of criminals Jess had left lying open on the table. What appeared to be his own portrait stared back at him from the corner of the right hand page.

Roy's heart almost stood still for a second as he saw that the whole thing was out. Mr. Keeler dropped into a chair by the table still keeping his eyes fixed on that picture.

Finally he raised them and looked at Roy.

"You have discovered the likeness then?" he said.

There was a depth of misery in his tone that went straight to the boy's heart.

"Yes," he said. "My oldest brother is a lawyer, you know. He brought this book home yesterday."

"And you thought I was this man?" went on Mr. Keeler.

"We didn't know what else to think," answered Roy in a low voice.

"And you were going to sit up all night to make sure that I didn't run off with the silver?"

The smile that accompanied these words was a very sad one. Then the face grew suddenly grave again and without waiting for Roy to make a response to his awkward question, Mr. Keeler continued:

"I don't blame you for thinking that brother Martin and I were one and the same person. He is only

a year younger than I and people could never tell us apart when we were boys. I remember we used to help them out by wearing sleeve buttons, an M on his and a C on mine.

"We were left orphans when very young, and Mart began to go to the bad at once. It commenced with robbing birds' nests and orchards, and ended with the confidence game for which he was last sent to jail. That is the reason I use my pen name always. I wonder if you believe what I am telling you."

"Yes, Mr. Keeler, I do," responded Roy heartily.

"I am sorry I stayed," went on the author. "I should not have run the risk. I had had nobody to vouch for me here, you see. I will go away now if you say so."

"Oh, no, no! I am so sorry it happened. It was only the merest chance we found out anything about it. It's all right now."

Involuntarily Roy put out his hand. The other took it with a glad light in his eyes. Then Roy turned out the lamp and they both went up stairs.

It was many a week before the young people of the Pell family ceased to talk among themselves over their singular experience with Mr. Charles Keeler. He left on the nine o'clock express the next morning, and everybody had been pleasant to him at the breakfast table except Jess, who did not come down.

Roy told the true state of the case before he went to bed that night, and the explanation was very gladly received by both Rex and Eva.

"It may be so," Jess replied; "but I'll take my breakfast after he is gone."

Roy told Sydney about the occurrence, and thought at first, from his brother's looks, that he was going to give him a severe rating for what he had done. A sort of convulsive tremor shook his frame, and he hastily took out his handkerchief to wipe away the beads of perspiration that had gathered on his forehead.

But he uttered no word of reproof; merely said that the boys should be careful about the friends they made.

"Don't you think Mr. Keeler is all right, Syd?" asked Roy.

"Yes, as it turned out, certainly I do," was the reply. "But it might have been otherwise."

For his part, Roy was very glad of the meeting. Since he had had that interview down by the creek he had been much more reconciled to leaving Marley.

"What if I had the burden to carry about with me that Mr. Keeler has!" he often told himself. "The consciousness that my brother was a scoundrel, a jail bird!"

CHAPTER XV

DUDLEY HARRINGTON

THE family moved into their city home early in September. And a beautiful one it was, with enough ground about it to give windows on all sides.

Of course a small army of servants was necessary to the running of such a dwelling, and Roy, Eva and Jess had many laughable experiences at first in accustoming themselves to being waited on. But Rex took to luxury as naturally as a duck to water.

He seemed to be growing up terribly fast since a fortune had come into the family. He insisted on having a latch key as soon as they moved to town, and felt very much aggrieved because his mother would not buy him a dog cart.

"But you are too young, my son," Mrs. Pell said in response to this request. "Remember you are not yet sixteen."

"Well, I shall be next month," he replied, "and I know perfectly well how to manage a horse, I've been out with Scott so much."

He had had Scott and Charlie Minturn to visit him just as soon as they were settled and took solid satisfaction in entertaining them in the style to which

he had been accustomed at their homes. But they did not seem to have any better time than they used to do down at "the Pellery" at Marley.

In fact they had enjoyed it there because things were different. Now it was Rex who was different. They could not state in just what the difference lay, but they felt it. And when they had gone Rex realized that he had not enjoyed their visit as much as he had expected to.

To be sure, the "solid satisfaction" was there at the thought of having entertained them as he had long wished to be able to do, but then there had seemed a constraint which had not existed before.

The trouble was here: he had relied on externals to please them this time, and had not exerted himself personally as he had been wont to do. In fact Rex was not at heart as contented as he had expected to be.

To be sure, he had now all the clothes he wanted, shoes galore, and more spending money than any boy of fifteen ought to have, but all the while he was thinking that he was missing something. And he was not exactly sure what this was.

He thought he had discovered one of the things toward the latter part of September, when the people who occupied the adjoining house to the Pells returned to town. They were evidently a family of great wealth — the Harringtons. Rex found what their name was from the servants.

There was a young man in the household — Dud-

ley Harrington. He was about twenty, and affected the sharpest crease to his trousers, the highest puffs to his neckties, carried his cane with the handle down and was altogether a dude of the latest type.

To become acquainted with this splendid youth now grew to be Reginald Pell's one absorbing ambition. He had always preferred to associate with boys older than himself; to be on terms of intimacy with a young man out of his teens, and who sported a mustache that was far advanced in the budding stage — that would be a triumph indeed.

But would he be able to accomplish his purpose? Although he was tall for his age, Rex could not hope that the object of his admiration would look upon him as anything else than a schoolboy. But he did not see him go out with many fellows of his own age.

He seemed to be the only child. The parents were elderly people, and the son was a good deal by himself.

Rex saw him sometimes in his own room, his feet on the table, a cigarette between his lips, the floor around him strewn with newspapers.

"I wonder if he doesn't ride a wheel," he asked himself one day. "I've half a mind to ask him to go out with me. We're neighbors. There can't be anything out of the way in my speaking to him."

The school which Rex and Roy were to attend did not open till the first of October, so the boys had a good deal of time on their hands just at present.

Roy spent much of it at Marley visiting his friends there; Rex was thus left to his own devices. On one of these days of Roy's absence Rex was riding his wheel in the Park when he passed Dudley Harrington, also mounted on a silent steed.

Instinctively almost Rex half bowed. It seemed natural to do so, when this fellow lived right next door and was so frequently in his thoughts. He was half alarmed at his temerity, when some one rode up by his side and said:

"Fine day for wheeling, isn't it?"

It was Harrington. He had circled about and caught up with him.

Rex was so overwhelmed that he nearly lost his balance. But he recovered himself in an instant, and his natural repose of manner asserted itself.

"Yes, indeed," he answered. "I was wondering if you had a wheel. Most fellows have one nowadays."

"Oh, this isn't mine. It's one I hired. I keep mine at New Haven."

"Oh, you're a Yale man then," exclaimed Rex, prouder than ever at having formed this acquaintance.

"Yes, go back next week," was the answer. "And glad enough I'll be, too. It's fearfully slow here at this time of year. Nobody back in town I know. Wouldn't have been myself, only the governor fell sick and I didn't want the mater to come on alone with him."

"What are you — senior?" inquired Rex respectfully.

"Oh, bless you no, only sophomore. By the way, you have just moved into that house next door, haven't you?"

"Yes, about three weeks ago."

"Well, there was a stupid lot enough there before you. A set of old maids, most of 'em. You must be sociable and come in to see a fellow. We've a pool table. You play — look out there!"

Rex was glad a man in a buggy stopped suddenly in front of him just then, calling for this diversion in subject. He did not know how to play pool and did not care to confess the fact just then.

When they were riding on unhindered again, he began to talk about Yale and led the other on to relate several of his first year experiences. By the time they struck the pavements again they were quite well acquainted.

"Let me see — your name's Pell, isn't it?" said Harrington, as they dismounted between the two houses.

"Yes, and I'm Reginald."

Harrington put out his hand.

"Well, I'm awfully glad to have met you, Pell. I say, come in to-night and see a fellow, won't you? That is if you haven't anything better to do."

Rex privately thought that he couldn't possibly have this, but he only said, "I'll be most happy to come."

The friendship thus begun, progressed very rap-

idly. Rex speedily learned how to play pool, but of this he said nothing at home. Harrington seemed to have taken a decided fancy to the fellow who did not conceal the fact that he was proud to be acquainted with him.

Rex's one source of regret was the fact that they were so soon to be separated.

"I say, Reggie," said Harrington suddenly on the day before his departure, "suppose you come over to New Haven with me. Just on a visit, I mean. I'll give you no end of a good time. We'll stop a night in New York on the way. Oh, you must come."

CHAPTER XVI

REX DETERMINES TO TAKE MATTERS INTO HIS OWN HANDS

Rex's cup of joy was full when Dudley Harrington asked him to go to New Haven with him. It would be pleasure indeed to go anywhere in company with that fascinating young gentleman, but to visit a college town in his company, to be introduced as his friend — this would be bliss indeed, thought Rex.

But on top of this realization of how much he wanted to go, came the fear that he could not obtain permission to accept. It was a humiliating reminder of his youth, Rex felt, to reflect that he must ask his mother before coming to any decision.

"I'd love to go, Harrington," he said. "I'll let you know about it in the morning. That will be time enough, won't it?"

"Plenty. I'll leave on the Limited, at five, I think. Get our dinner on board and be ready for fun in New York when we get there. I say, why don't you decide now, Reggie?"

"Oh, I guess I can go," stammered Rex.

He hated to confess that he must first ask leave.

"When can I get back?" he asked.

"Oh, by Saturday, or you can stay over till Monday with me if you will. We never do much the first of the term, and I've got plenty of room in my quarters."

The Pells knew that Rex had formed the acquaintance of "the Harrington fellow." They also knew that he was to go to college in a few days, so, if Mrs. Pell feared any evil influence over Reginald, she consoled herself with the thought that this would be removed in a very short time.

Now when Rex came with the request that he be allowed to go to New Haven with his new friend, her answer was a prompt and decided "No."

"But I've as good as told him I'd go, mother," he pleaded.

"You had no right to do that," rejoined Mrs. Pell. "You wouldn't be in your element at all in the company of his friends, and of course you are sure to meet a great many of them."

"I'm in my element in his company. He's had me over there every day since we got acquainted. Besides, just think, I've never been to New York in my life since I was a baby, and this will be a splendid chance for me to see it. I can pay all my own expenses, so I needn't be under obligations to him. Please, mother; I didn't go on that trip with the Bowmans and now after school commences I shan't have another chance."

But Mrs. Pell was firm. She was a woman quick

to discern character and she had seen enough of Dudley Harrington through the windows to conclude that he was not the sort of person to whom she wished to intrust an impulsive boy like Rex for two or three days. She chided herself now for having permitted the intimacy to go as far as it had.

Rex knew that it was useless to say more, and presently went to his room.

Here he threw himself on his sofa and brooded over his troubles. It seemed to him that he was the most unlucky fellow that ever lived. He never could have what he wanted. Even the money that he imagined was going to bring so much happiness failed to keep to the agreement, as he looked upon it.

"But just wait till I'm a little older," he told himself. "I'll make up for lost time then."

Still, this would not help him out of his present slough of despond. He thought of how lonesome he should be after Harrington went away the next day. He could have Scott or Charlie Minturn up to see him, to be sure, but somehow, since he had known Harrington, these old friends had not seemed so entertaining to him as they once had.

"And that trip to New Haven would bridge over the time nicely till school opens," he told himself. "I don't see why mother won't let me go."

But he knew perfectly well what the reason was. He realized that Harrington had habits which none of his associates had ever had. But what of it?

"I needn't smoke or drink if I don't want to," he

argued. "I haven't done it yet. Besides, it will do me good to see a little of the world."

He rose from the sofa, lighted the gas, and just as he had done that day when he had heard who was Mr. Tyler's heir, he collected the money from his different pockets and counted it up. His allowance was a liberal one, and he had been saving up to buy a birthday present for his mother.

"Seven dollars and forty cents," he repeated to himself. "I wonder how much the fare will be."

He put on his hat and went down stairs.

"Where are you going, Rex?" asked his mother, as he passed the group who were sitting on the front porch, for it was a sultry evening.

"Only down the street a little way. "I'll be right up," he replied.

"I wonder if Harrington's people ask him where he's going every step he takes," he muttered to himself as he strode off.

He forgot the five years' difference in their ages; thought only of the surveillance under which he chafed.

He kept on till he reached the hotels, and entering one of them, he hunted around till he found a railway guide.

A short consultation of this apprized him of the fact that he had enough to pay his fare to New Haven and back, but very little more.

"I suppose I shall have no expense while there," he mused, "being Harrington's guest. I think I may

risk it, and if I get stuck he'll help me out, though I'd hate to ask him."

For Rex had formed a resolution. He had determined to go on the coveted trip without his mother's consent. He could leave a note explaining where he was.

It would not be half as terrible a thing, he argued, as for a fellow to run away from home and not mean to come back. There would be a great row raised about it, he supposed, but meanwhile he would have had a good time and the worst that they would do to him would be to send him away to boarding school, and he shouldn't mind that very much.

He thought all this out on his way back from the hotel. To be sure, he would have to use the money he had been saving up for his mother's present, but then he was in no mood to give her anything now.

He felt some twinges as his thoughts touched on this point, but at that moment some one took his stand in front of him and exclaimed: "Surrender or give the countersign."

It was Harrington.

"Yale," answered Rex promptly.

"You've decided to go, then," said Harrington. turning around to walk back with him. "That's right. We'll have oceans of fun. We'll meet Stout and Cheever in New York, and we can just paint the town, I tell you."

Rex was not certain that he would do any town

painting. He would be quite content to be in Harrington's company.

"I can go if it doesn't cost too much," he replied, thinking it best to be frank on that point on the start. "You see, my allowance isn't a big one as yet, and I don't dare ask for any more."

"Oh, ten dollars will squeeze through easy enough."

Harrington said this as though ten dollars was no harder to get than ten cents. Rex's heart sank. Where was he to obtain the two dollars and forty cents he still lacked?

"Won't you come in?" Harrington asked, as Rex stopped in front of the Pells'.

"No; not to-night. I'll meet you at the station to-morrow at a quarter to five."

"What's the matter with my calling here for you and our going up together?"

"Oh, I'll have to go down town first and start from there." Rex felt that this was a very lame excuse. He was not accustomed to telling untruths.

But Harrington seemed not to notice.

"All right, just as you say," he replied. "But I'll see you in the morning any way."

"Good night," Rex called after him.

He felt that his not going home with Harrington was a good stroke of policy. He decided to add another to it by sitting with the family a while before he went up to his room.

"Scott wanted to know if you can't come down and see him to-morrow, Rex," began Roy, as his brother

seated himself on the top step and began fanning himself with his hat. "He told me to tell you to come down on the 5:30 prepared to stay all night."

Rex's heart gave a sudden leap. Circumstances seemed to favor his plan. If he only had three dollars more now!

"I guess I'll go," he said. "Are you going, Roy?"

"No, I'm going to that ratification meeting with Syd to-morrow night, you know. If you don't go down to Marley, Rex, you'd better come with us. There are to be some fine speeches."

"Perhaps I will," responded Rex.

He was turning over in his mind how he was going to get that money. The matter of his getting off to the station was simple enough now. He could even go with Harrington without exciting suspicion. It would be supposed he was bound for Marley.

What a web of deceit he was planning to wind about himself. But he forcibly put this thought out of his mind whenever it obtruded itself. He would have time enough to repent when he came back.

CHAPTER XVII

REX ARRIVES IN NEW YORK

"'I SAY, Roy, can you lend me three dollars?"

Rex had crossed the hall to his brother's room some time after the family had come up stairs.

"Why, where's all your money gone to, Rex? I thought you were saving up to get mother a present."

"So I was, but — but I've bought it and now I haven't got enough left to take me down to Marley to-morrow night. Just let me have three dollars. I'll pay you back when I get my next allowance on Monday."

"You've bought mother's present!" exclaimed Roy. "What did you get? Let me see it."

"No, I want to keep it a secret till I give it to her," replied Rex quickly. "Now about that three dollars, can you let me have it, old fellow?"

"Certainly I can, but be sure to give it back to me Monday, as I haven't enough to get the present I have set my heart on. I'll — but there, if you won't tell about yours, I shan't say anything about mine. Then we'll have a grand surprise party all around on the third."

Roy stepped to his dressing case and took out a two

dollar and a one dollar bill, which he handed to Rex.

"Thanks, ever so much," murmured the latter. "Good night," and he hurried back to his own room.

He had never felt so mean in his life. Not only had he just obtained money under false pretenses, but he had told two or three falsehoods of the most unblushing description.

Roy's very readiness to oblige him added to his weight of remorse.

He sat down on the edge of the bed and began to tuck the money away in his pocket book. Was he really a criminal? he asked himself.

How horrified they had all been when they thought Mr. Charles Keeler had been an inmate of jails. Was it any worse to have committed a crime and have been punished for it, than to commit the crime and not be found out?

For a moment or two he was — shall I call it tempted? — to go back to his brother's room, return the three dollars and confess the whole thing. Then he thought of New York, of his induction to a college town, of his promise to Harrington to meet him at the station.

"No; I must go now," he reflected. "I can call it sowing my wild oats," and he undressed as quickly as possible and got into bed, as if fearful that his repentant tendencies would conquer in spite of him.

He was very quiet the next day. About ten o'clock Harrington came in to see him. It was the first time he had ever been to the house. Rex had not asked

him, thinking he had no special attractions to offer him.

Mrs. Pell and the girls were out shopping. Roy was down at the office with Syd. Rex asked Harrington if he would like to come up in his room.

"Of course I would. A fellow's generally curious about the inside of a house when he's been looking on the outside of it half the days of his life."

So Rex took him up stairs. He admired the "den," as he called it, immensely.

"Wait till you see mine at Yale," he added, as he struck a match to light his inveterate cigarette. "I don't do much fixing up at home here. I'm here so little. By the way, you don't mind me smoking, do you?"

"Oh, no," replied Rex faintly.

Nevertheless, he was wondering what his mother would say if the odor still lingered when she came. Sydney did not smoke at all, and the entire family abominated cigarettes.

Mrs. Pell did come home shortly after Harrington had taken his departure. She came up to the third floor to put away some flannels she had bought for the boys.

"Reginald," she said, as soon as she entered the room, "you have been smoking."

Rex was reading by the window, and he turned around in startled disquiet.

"No, I haven't, mother," he replied quickly.

"Where does that smell of cigarette smoke come

from, then?" and Mrs. Pell coughed and then came up close to look her son in the eye.

"Dudley Harrington has been here," he replied. "He was smoking."

"You are sure you were not smoking with him?" went on Mrs. Pell, adding with a sudden bending down over him, "Kiss me."

Rex complied, glad indeed that this time, at any rate, there was nothing he wished to conceal.

"Forgive me for doubting you, Reggie," said his mother, as she lingered an instant to stroke the hair back from his forehead.

Once more Rex weakened in his purpose, if one can be said to weaken when he is really stronger for the moment to resist an impulse for evil. But then he reflected that now he had the money and the opportunity of getting off to the station without being questioned. The facts seemed to will that he should go.

And he went, stopping for Harrington at half past four. When they reached the station he found that he had to pay a dollar extra for the privilege of riding over to New York in the Chicago Limited.

But it was very select to travel on such a train, and the dinner that he and Harrington ate en route was one long to be remembered.

In fact there were so many new and novel sensations and impressions received from this first stage of his trip, that Rex was surprised he did not derive more solid enjoyment from it.

It was impossible for him to keep out of his mind,

however, the fact that he was now supposed to be at Marley with Scott Bowman. He had come away without leaving behind him the note he had at first planned to write.

"You must come to Yale sure, Reggie," Harrington told him. "Can't you get ready to enter next fall? I'll be a junior then, and can look out for you, you know."

"I wish I could," returned Rex, rather more soberly than the nature of the subject seemed to warrant.

He was thinking that it would be so much pleasanter to go to New Haven legitimately than in his present stolen fashion.

When they arrived at New York, Harrington said he would go at once to the hotel where he was to meet some of "the boys." Rex wondered whether they were going to stop at this hotel over night, and if so, how much it would cost. But he decided he would not ask, but wait and find out.

It was nearly eight when Harrington sent up his card to J. Ashley Stout in one of the plainer looking hotels on upper Broadway. Word came back that Mr. Stout was in his room on the fifth floor and would be glad to have Mr. Harrington come up.

"Come on, Reggie," said the Philadelphian.

Rex was not sure whether he liked Harrington to call him Reggie. Sometimes it seemed to place him on a more familiar footing with the collegian, and at other times he had a suspicion that the name was em-

ployed merely to recall to the younger the fact of the difference in their ages.

Mr. Stout proved to be a young man with a red face, a very unpleasant complexion, and an abnormally weak voice. He had neither coat, vest nor collar on, and his eyes looked as if the bell boy's knock had wakened him from a sound sleep.

"Glad to see you, Harri, old boy," he said, shaking Harrington vigorously by the hand. "Excuse appearances. Was just taking a snooze to prepare for the evening."

"No apologies, Jack. Let me introduce my friend, Reginald Pell. He's a neighbor of mine at home. He's going up to Yale with me to see if he likes it well enough to be one of us next year."

"Proud to know any friend of Harri's, I'm sure," and Mr. Stout gave Rex a hand that was so disagreeably clammy that the younger lad could scarcely resist the impulse to take out his handkerchief and wipe off the touch of it.

From the conversation that ensued he ascertained that Stout came from somewhere up in New York State and that for some reason or other he appeared to be quite a favorite with his classmates. One or two others were expected in the course of the evening, and the hope that they might go to the theater was now quenched in Rex's breast.

Harrington and Stout talked volubly of things in which he was not the least interested — other college men, New Haven girls, fraternity affairs, and the

like. Rex sat there listening, trying to look as if he were having a good time, but failing signally. However, this made no difference, as neither Harrington nor Stout paid any attention to him.

Presently Stout began to complete his dressing, talking all the while. Although he was not angry, he seemed to find it necessary to interlard his conversation with some very strong and unpleasant sounding expressions, and once or twice Harrington followed his example.

In fact the latter did not appear to be the same fellow here in New York that he was at home. Once in a while he looked at Rex and smiled as if mutely reminding the latter that he owed the good time he was having to him. But Rex found it harder and harder to smile back, and he welcomed a knock that by and by came at the door as signalizing a change of some sort.

CHAPTER XVIII

REX SEES A HORRIBLE SPECTACLE

THREE new fellows followed the knock into the room. They were noisily greeted by Stout and Harrington. In the confusion it was some time before Rex was introduced.

Tom Cheever was a tall youth, continually feeling of his upper lip as if to see if his mustache had arrived; Dan Tilford had a narrow face, pallid from much cigarette smoking, and an eye that never seemed fixed on any object he gazed at; Harry Atkins was a handsome fellow of eighteen, who seemed of quieter temperament than the others.

Stout gave an order to the boy who had shown the last callers up, and the lad presently appeared staggering under a big bowl of what Stout declared was the "rummest punch" New York could brew.

"Help yourselves, fellows!" he cried. "Remember that the last night of vacation only comes once a year."

The room was already filled with cigarette smoke. Two or three of these cigarettes had been offered to Rex, but he had declined with a vacillating "Not now, thank you."

When the punch was passed around he took the glass that was handed to him, but only pretended to drink. He did not care for liquor; he knew that it would give him a headache. He was having a terribly stupid time as it was. It was not worth while to aggravate it by the addition of physical suffering.

He was appalled at the swiftness with which the others tossed off the drink. It seemed scarcely five minutes before Stout was calling out:

"Fill 'em up again, men! Here's to the coming year. May none of us be plucked and ponies be plentiful."

He took up glass after glass and refilled it. Rex saw what was coming and tried to be prepared for it.

"Why, Pell!" exclaimed the hospitable host, "you haven't drunk a drop. What does this mean?"

"I don't drink, than you," stammered Rex, conscious that he ought to look the other straight in the eye as he made this response, but dropping his handkerchief so that he might have an excuse to stoop down and pick it up instead.

"Oh, yes you do, when you are among gentlemen like us, Reggie." Harrington came forward hastily to say this.

The others held their glasses half way to their lips and watched for the outcome with interest.

If Rex were the hero of this tale it would doubtless be my pleasant duty to record the fact that he lifted the glass from the table, poured the contents into the

bowl, and said that he could not go back on his principles.

But Rex unfortunately is not of the stuff of which heroes are made. He felt that he would rather endure a headache than the jeers of those five fellows.

"Of course," he said feebly, and drank off the glassful at one draft.

"And now for another," said Stout, promptly filling it up again.

Rex had never signed the pledge, but he knew that his mother did not want him to touch liquor. And it had been no deprivation for him to refrain, as he did not like it. What he had just drunk burnt his throat like fire. It seemed as if he could not possibly swallow any more.

His misery showed itself in his face. Atkins, who was standing just opposite on the other side of the table on which the punch bowl had been placed, saw it.

"I say, Pell," he called out softly, "come here a minute."

He stepped over to the open window, which looked out on an airshaft. Wondering what he wanted, Rex followed him.

The others were busy with the punch.

"You don't want that, I know," whispered Atkins. "I don't want any more either. Look here."

As he spoke, he dexterously emptied his glass out of the window. Rex was quick to follow his example.

"Those fellows don't know when they've had

enough," he said, "and somebody ought to keep a level head on his shoulders to look out for them."

Rex's heart sank within him. And it was for this that he had spent the money he had been saving for his mother's birthday gift! for this he had deceived this mother! for this told those falsehoods to Roy!

"Are you fellows ready for another round?" called out Stout, looking over at them. "Slip up to the captain's office and — get a settler."

His voice already began to sound thick.

"We must go and pretend to join them," Atkins whispered.

So glasses were filled for the third time, and on this occasion Atkins retired with Rex to the other side of the room, and watching his opportunity, poured his punch into the water pitcher. Rex, in trying to do likewise, let slip the glass, and it fell with a crash into the basin.

A roar of laughter greeted the incident.

"Good for you, Pell," cried Tom Cheever. "Trying to infuse a little life into the party. That's right, my boy, that's right."

The fellow came over toward Rex, walking a little unsteadily, and with such a leer in his eye that Rex shrank back against the wall.

At that moment Harrington came up and put his arm around Rex's neck.

"I always said that Reggie Pell was a gentleman," he mumbled. "Now you can see it for yourselves."

"And his clothes fit him," added Dan Tilford, as a special mark of approval.

"Oh, they imagine they're having no end of sport," whispered Atkins. "Look at Harrington. He's half seas over, too."

He was so far over, indeed, that he was very ill for a time. It was a fearful scene.

"Here, Pell," Atkins called to him from the bed where he had gone to look after Cheever. "See what you can do for your friend."

And Rex went over to Harrington and tried to pilot him to a seat. Then he held the other's head and shut his eyes, while he wondered if there was ever such a donkey on the face of the earth as he, Reginald Pell, to do all that he had done for this.

If it hadn't been close on to midnight he would have gone home there and then. But now Harrington was well nigh helpless, and Rex knew nothing about New York. Where was he going to sleep that night? Harrington was in no condition to have questions put to him now.

A fixed look came over Rex's face.

"I must go now," he said, looking around for his hat and valise.

"What, you're not going off and leave Harrington, are you?" asked Atkins.

"I can't do anything more for him and I must get out of this place. Perhaps I'll call in the morning to see how he is. Good night. I'm much obliged to you."

"Well, I suppose you are better off out of here, but aren't you going to hire a room in the hotel?"

"No, I want to get as far away from the place as possible."

Rex noticed that Stout was looking around at him. He shut the door quickly and hurried off. He breathed a great sigh of relief when he reached the open air.

He turned down a side street to collect his thoughts before deciding what to do. He wandered till he reached the middle of the block, then, finding his valise heavy, he set it down on the sidewalk to rest a minute.

It was after midnight and very quiet. Suddenly he felt something hit him in the face, and then for a minute or two all was a blank to him.

CHAPTER XIX

A MEMORABLE NIGHT

When Rex came to his senses again he found himself leaning against a brown stone stoop. His head felt very queer.

"I wonder if it can be the effect of that glass of punch I drank?" he asked himself.

Then he glanced down at the sidewalk and saw that his valise — a handsome new one — was missing. A terrible fear came to him.

He put his hand to the breast pocket of his coat. Yes, it was true. He had been assaulted and robbed in the street.

His money, his return ticket to Philadelphia, were gone, to say nothing of his satchel and the clothes that were in it. He looked helplessly up and down the street.

All was quiet as it had been before. A man was coming toward him on the other side of the way. But that individual could have had nothing to do with robbing him.

No, the thief had made his escape long since, and it was hopeless to try to overtake him.

Rex had one thing with which to console himself. His watch — a silver one Syd had recently given him — had not been taken. He thrust his hands into his trousers pockets.

Yes, there was some loose change there. He took it out and anxiously counted it under a lamp. There were seventy-three cents all told.

And now the question arose, What was he to do? For one instant the expedient of returning to the hotel and throwing himself on the good will of those he had left there suggested itself to him. But only for an instant.

The recollection of the scene he had quitted came back with all its vividness. No, he would not go back there.

He deserved all that had befallen him. He had been a fool ever to take up with Harrington. The fellow had only encouraged him because it flattered his vanity to be looked up to the way Rex had looked up to the collegian.

But he had no time now for self reproaches. He must decide what he should do.

He looked at his watch. It was ten minutes to one. He did not remember to have been up so late in his life. But he did not feel sleepy. He was far too excited for that.

"If I could only get back to Philadelphia," was his thought.

He knew that the single fare was two dollars and a half. What if he bought a ticket to a place as far

as his seventy-three cents would carry him? He would be that much nearer home at any rate.

But there were no trains at this time of night. What should he do with himself in the meantime? To pay for a night's lodging would only still further deplete his scanty stock of cash.

Poor Rex felt as destitute, as desolate as any waif in all that great city. He had been cared for all his life, and now that he was suddenly thrown upon his own resources, he felt helpless, like a rudderless bark on a tossing sea.

For all he was much more ready to express an opinion than Roy, he had not half the push and energy of the latter, who, although quieter, was nevertheless the more determined character of the two.

Rex walked on now rapidly till he reached the lighted avenue. He had had all the experience he wanted of lingering in the side street. He halted on the corner and looked up and down in search of an Elevated Railroad station. He thought he had better get down to where the train started, so that he might be ready to take the first one.

The idea of telegraphing home had already occurred to him, but he dismissed it at once.

"No," he said, "I've done enough harm as it is. Some one would have to come on for me, and mother would worry. They'll think now till noon to-morrow, and perhaps later, that I'm with Scott. Perhaps I can even get back before they know I haven't been there."

If he only had his wheel! He had no clear idea of

just how far the two cities were apart. He only knew that it hadn't taken him very long to come over in the Chicago Limited.

He found the station of the Elevated, and after waiting a long time he boarded a train. The people scattered through the cars were nearly all asleep. Rex dropped off himself almost as soon as he sank into a seat. He was utterly worn out.

The next thing of which he was conscious was that the train was at a standstill and that the guard was shaking him, with the words:

"Here, wake up, young man. We're at the Battery. The train doesn't go any farther."

Rex rubbed his eyes. It took him an instant or two to realize where he was.

The guard was not rough with him.

"Where do you want to go?" he asked.

"To the Pennsylvania station," answered Rex.

"Then you've come too far. You ought to have got off at Cortlandt Street."

"Is it too far to walk back?" asked Rex, mindful of his small supply of money.

"About three stations. You can keep along the river. It'll be nearer that way."

"Thank you," returned Rex. He wasn't in a hurry. He might as well walk. But he was terribly sleepy, and when he got to the foot of the stairway, he became rather confused.

He heard the water washing against the sea wall. He walked on in the direction of the sound and found

himself standing at the very end of Manhattan Island looking toward the bay.

It was very quiet except for the light splash of the waves and the soft sound of escaping steam from an engine overhead. Rex was not certain in which direction he ought to go to reach the ferry. There seemed to be water on both sides of him.

There was nobody around of whom to inquire except a tramp or two asleep on one of the benches, and he did not wish to go near them. He turned away from the river and walked off through Battery Park till he saw a policeman.

The latter directed him how to go, looking at him pretty sharply. Rex hurried off, but presently stopped under a lamp post to glance at his watch. It was a quarter to two. There was no need to hurry.

But he was afraid to walk slow. It was very quiet along the water front at this time of night. He did not want to be "held up" again and lose his watch and what little money he had left.

Here was a man coming toward him now. But he was drunk. Rex was not afraid of him. He was only filled with a shame that sent the color to his cheeks.

Why was Dudley Harrington any better than this reeling sailor? And Harrington had been his ideal.

He reached the ferry just as a boat went out. He fell asleep while waiting for the next one. He was awakened by one of the attendants. The company evidently did not intend to allow the ferry rooms to be turned into a free lodging house.

The ticket office was not open on the New York side, so Rex just paid his ferriage. On reaching Jersey City he found that there was to be no train till 6:20 a. m.

He could not sleep in the waiting room. He walked out in the streets of the city a little distance, but was so tired he could scarcely drag one foot after the other. He was so sleepy, too, that his eyes kept closing every minute.

Then he was afraid of meeting a footpad. He did not know where to go. To hire a room at a hotel would take all his money. And yet he could not walk the streets all night.

Ah, he was being well punished for all his sins! And where had been the "good time" for which he had been willing to commit them?

He thought of Roy asleep in his comfortable bed at home. When should he (Rex) ever be able to feel as cosy in mind as this twin brother of his must? For even if he did succeed in getting home without something terrible befalling him, there remained his confession to make.

For he must tell everything. He had made up his mind to that.

But this was in the future. Meantime the present must be provided for. He turned and walked back to the ferry.

If he could only lie down somewhere, he thought.

There was a boat just starting out. He paid his three cents and went aboard. He fell asleep almost as

soon as he touched the seat. A man came through when they reached New York, woke him up and made him get off.

But he was reckless now. He walked out to the street, but immediately turned about again, paid another ferriage and walked on the boat, where he instantly fell asleep once more.

And he kept this up till half-past five, when it began to grow light. Then he went ashore to the station in Jersey City and bought some fruit, which he ate for his breakfast.

By that time the ticket office was open and he went up to the agent and asked how far he could ride for fifty cents.

The man looked at him closely for a minute.

"Which way?" he inquired then.

"I want to go to Philadelphia," Rex answered frankly. All his pride had gone now. "I've only got fifty cents to spend on the ride, though. I want to get as close to it as I can."

The agent named a town and passed out a ticket.

When the cars were opened Rex lost no time in settling himself in a seat. He put his ticket in his hat and went to sleep at once.

The result was that he was carried past his stopping place, and the station at which he was set off was a few miles nearer Philadelphia than he had hoped to get. But the brakeman told him that the Quaker City was still fifty miles away.

CHAPTER XX

THE CRISIS

"Fifty miles!"

Rex repeated these words to himself as he stood on the platform of the station and looked after the swiftly vanishing cars.

How soon that train would cover them! It seemed such a simple thing to stay on board and be carried there, so cruel to be left behind simply for the lack of a little more money.

It was still quite early in the morning. People were coming down to take the train to the city. They had all been in their beds and had a good night's sleep doubtless. They were much better fitted for a long tramp than was he, who had not been to bed at all.

But he must set off at once. He asked the baggage man to tell him the road to Philadelphia.

"Sure, there it is, in front of you," replied the other, pointing to the gleaming steel rails.

"No, no; I mean the carriage road," returned Rex.

The man looked surprised, but gave him directions how to find it, and presently Rex was tramping down its dusty length.

"But I can never get there by to-night, nor by to-morrow night either," he kept saying to himself. "And I shall have to eat, and my money will not hold out till then."

Again he thought of telegraphing — this time to Sydney. But where should he stay while he was waiting for the answer? Then he remembered how ill Syd still looked, and he recalled the doctor's inquiry that afternoon in the office as to whether he had had a shock.

No; he must leave telegraphing as the very last resort of all.

He trudged on, and presently saw a tramp coming towards him.

"Good morning," said the fellow, halting where he came up. "What time is it, boss?"

Rex had just looked at his watch, so without taking it out he told the time.

The man took a step closer to him, but just then a cloud of dust appeared in the road, and a buggy came into view. The tramp moved on without a word.

This incident did not tend to make Rex any more comfortable in mind. And now his body was beginning to rebel.

His stomach felt light, his heart heavy, and his limbs appeared to be weighted with lead. Coming to a spot where trees grew by the roadside he halted and stretched himself on the grass to rest.

He was no longer sleepy, but so tired. He felt that he was going to be ill.

The thought terrified him. Sick out here on the highway, only a few cents in his pockets, and not a friend anywhere about!

It was growing hot and he was getting hungry. His breakfast had been a very light one. The last regular meal he had eaten was on the Chicago Limited. How long ago that seemed now!

He took out his money and counted it over. There was but sixteen cents left. He felt that he could eat that much worth for his very next meal.

There seemed to be no way out of it but to telegraph home, and he had better do it, he decided, before he was too ill to attend to it.

But there was no place now from which to send a message. He must keep on till he came to the next town.

He rose to his feet and had taken but a few steps when some one came up from behind and touched him on the shoulder.

He turned quickly, in fear of another tramp. It was a tramp truly, but a mere boy, not much older than himself. He was very pale and sickly looking, his clothes were torn in two or three places and his shoes were worn clear down to the uppers.

He did not speak. He stood there looking at Rex, amazement depicted in his gaze.

"I — I made a mistake," he stammered out at last. "I thought you were one of us. I saw you lying down there under the tree. Your shoes were all dusty. I knew you'd been tramping."

But Rex did not feel astonished. He felt so ill and faint that his head swam, and he began to totter.

"I'll have to lie down again, I guess," he said weakly.

He had just time to move aside out of the dust when he fell like a log.

"What's the matter? Are you sick?"

The shabby looking youth had dropped to one knee beside Rex and was looking down at him with pitying eyes.

"Yes," was all Rex had strength to murmur.

Then he closed his eyes and did not care what became of him. The strange lad let his other knee sink to the earth and remained in this attitude for several minutes, gazing earnestly at Rex.

"Poor chap," he muttered. "I can't make out what he's doing tramping the country this way. He don't look poor. What'll I do with him?"

The first thing to be done, evidently, was to get him out of the sun, which beat down on the spot where he had fallen with fierce intensity.

The stranger bent over, and exerting all his strength lifted Rex in his arms and bore him back along the road to the grassy strip under the trees where he had recently been lying.

Rex opened his eyes for an instant when he felt himself raised from the ground. Then, when he saw the pity in the plain face looking down into his, he closed them again with a little sigh.

And now once more the strange youth sat contem-

plating the boy, who seemed to be a tramper like himself, but who, in every other respect, was so vastly different.

He noted the fine, delicately chiseled features, the smallness of his feet, the whiteness and smoothness of his hands. He had seen boys like this before, but he had never before touched one, never had one of them dependent on him, as it were, as this fellow appeared to be now.

Miles Harding did not know just what to do with the responsibility. And yet he was happy at having it; he felt glad that he had been able to do that little thing of carrying the boy from the sun into the shade.

It was not often that he was able to do anything for anybody. He was always in need of having something done for himself.

He tried to think of something else he might do. He noticed that Rex's head did not seem to rest very comfortably.

He took off his coat and started to make a roll of it for a pillow. But he stopped when he had it half finished.

"Maybe he wouldn't like that," he muttered, looking down at the garment as he unrolled it again.

It had been made for a man. There were rents in two places and plentiful sprinklings of grease spots.

The day was growing steadily warmer. Even under the tree one felt the heat.

"He wouldn't catch cold without his own," Miles

murmured, and he bent over Rex and lifted him gently while he tried to take off his coat.

Rex opened his eyes and looked at him again as if in protest.

"I was going to make a pillow for you out of your coat," Miles explained. "You don't feel able to walk till we get to a house, do you?"

Rex slowly shook his head. He was in that condition which sometimes comes to those in seasickness, when he didn't care whether he lived or died.

"Have you got pain?" went on Miles.

"Only when I walk," answered Rex; then, as if talking, too, hurt him, he closed his eyes and sank back upon the pillow the other made for him out of his coat.

Meantime clouds had been gathering in the west. Miles had been too much occupied with his unexpected charge to notice them. But now he looked up and saw the threatening aspect of the heavens with troubled countenance.

He rose to his feet and strode out into the middle of the road, looking first in one direction, then the other.

His eye brightened as he saw a buggy coming from the westward.

He watched impatiently, till it came up, and then saw that it contained two men. He held up his hand as a signal for them to stop. But the driver, who had been talking earnestly with his companion, cut the horse with his whip, shook his head and drove on.

Miles remained there, standing in the road, a hopeless droop coming over his whole figure.

"They think I want to beg of them, I suppose," he told himself. "What shall I do?"

Already the sun had gone under the cloud masses and the air was much cooler. The wind rose and began to rustle the leaves.

Quite a distance off down the road, in the direction whence the buggy had come, the red tops of two chimneys could be seen peeping above the trees.

"He can't stay here in the rain," Miles muttered. "I must try to get him to that house."

He turned to Rex again. He took the coat from under his head and made him put it on.

"It's going to storm," he said. "I'm going to carry you to that house."

"You can't," was all Rex had strength to say.

"I'm going to try," returned Miles, and he gathered Rex up in his arms just as the wind came sweeping down upon them in a gust that was ominous of that which was to follow.

CHAPTER XXI

MILES HARDING

It was physically impossible for Miles Harding to carry Rex very far without stopping to rest. The life of a tramp, with insufficient nourishment, was not calculated to strengthen the long arms which could easily wrap themselves about the other boy, but had little power to retain him in their embrace.

But Miles fought to do his best. He only consented to stop and deposit his burden on the grass when he felt that, did he not do so, he would be compelled to drop it.

Then, after resting a moment or two, he would be off again.

"Don't; you will strain yourself," Rex whispered once, protestingly.

But Miles's only answer was, "I must. You can't be out here in the storm."

In this way they progressed until they had nearly reached the house. Then the rain began to come down in torrents.

Miles made a last desperate effort. Picking Rex up, he ran the intervening distance, although it was

twice as far as he usually bore his burden without stopping.

He dashed in at the gate and then, so exhausted was he that he sank down beside Rex when he deposited the latter on the floor of the piazza. He lay there breathing hard, while the rain came down in sheets.

He had not even strength to turn his head when he heard the screen door behind him open and some one come out.

"Who — who are you and what do you want?"

The question was put by a very sweet girlish voice. And the girl who put it was herself exceedingly pretty.

She had opened the door that led out from the wide, breezy hall, and stepped upon the piazza. She now looked down upon the two boys lying there with undisguised astonishment.

Then she came around so that Miles could see her.

"I beg your pardon, miss," he said, stopping between every three or four words to take breath; "I wanted to get — him out of the — rain. This was the nearest — house. I hope you don't mind."

"Is he ill?" she asked.

Rex's face was turned partly towards her. It was very pale now, but Florence Raynor was thinking also how very handsome it was and in what contrast to that of the fellow who had answered her.

"Yes, he's very sick, I'm afraid," replied Miles.

"Is he your brother?" went on Florence.

"Oh, no; just — a friend."

Miles hesitated before he added the last word; then when he had said it a look of pride came into his eyes for an instant.

"I'll call mother," said the girl, and she hurried off to the kitchen, where Mrs. Raynor was making cake.

"Oh, mama," she exclaimed, "the noise I heard was two tramps who had come in on our piazza out of the rain. At least one of them is a tramp, and the other is the nicest looking boy, about the age of our Bert. He's sick and just as pale! But he's dressed very well, and I can't understand how they came to be together. Won't you come out and see them, please?"

Mrs. Raynor scraped the dough from her fingers and followed her daughter to the front porch. Miles had gone over to take Rex's head on his knee and was softly stroking the hair back from the damp forehead.

"Oh, yes; the poor fellow is very ill," Mrs. Raynor exclaimed as soon as she saw him.

She scarcely gave a glance at Miles. She stood for one instant as if thinking deeply. Then with a resolved tone, she turned to Harding.

"Can you help me get him up stairs and in bed?" she asked.

"I guess so, ma'am," Miles replied. "I've got my breath back now. I have to carry him, you know. You're awfully good to take him in this way."

"One must be terribly hard hearted to turn away one in his condition. Come."

Between them they lifted Rex and bore him into the house and up the broad, easy stairs to a little room at the head of them.

"We must get these wet clothes off at once," said Mrs. Raynor, and Miles stayed there to help her.

They put him to bed, and then the good lady declared that they ought to have a doctor.

"Let me go for one," Miles exclaimed. "I want to do something for him."

Mrs. Raynor, now that Rex no longer absorbed her entire attention, turned her gaze on his companion. Miles colored beneath it.

"Perhaps you don't think I'm fit to go?" he said slowly.

It was Mrs. Raynor's turn to color now. She saw that this fellow, so shabbily dressed, was of very sensitive nature. A happy way of turning the thing off occurred to her.

"You are wet, too," she said. "And it is raining still. I will have the man from the barn go."

She hurried off down stairs to call him. Miles lingered, looking toward the bed, where lay the fellow who had attracted him so strongly.

"I s'pose they don't want me hanging around here any longer," he mused. "They can do everything for him there is to be done. But I don't want to leave him."

Miles Harding's nature was a singular one for a

boy brought up as he had been. Thrown upon his own resources when he was hardly more than twelve, he had received some pretty hard knocks from the world. But the hardness of these had not cultivated a like hardness in him whom they struck.

His temperament had always been a sympathetic one. He had many times received harsh treatment that would never have come to him, by seeking to protect some persecuted cat or dog.

Thus far the recipient of his kindly ministrations had always been some dumb animal. Now that the opportunity had offered to extend these to a human being, Miles was loath to put it aside.

"What a nice fellow he is!" he murmured. "I wonder where he belongs!"

Just then Florence came to the door. The thought instantly flashed into Miles's brain that she had been sent there to see that he did not steal anything.

But he was accustomed to being the object of such suspicions. And yet, somehow, the idea that he should be, hurt him more than usual on the present occasion.

"My mother would like to see you down stairs," said Florence. "I will stay here with him."

Miles went down and found Mrs. Raynor at the foot of the stairway.

"It has just occurred to me," she said, "that you may think it best to send to the home of this young man. Who is he?"

A troubled look came over Miles's face. He feared that what he was about to say would settle the matter

once for all about his being allowed to stay with the fellow up stairs. But he had to tell the truth.

"I don't know his name," he answered. "I fell in with him on the road. But I'd so much like to do something for him. You are sure there is nothing I can do?"

"You have already done a great deal for him," returned Mrs. Raynor, "if, as I understand, you carried him in here out of the rain. And you haven't any idea where he belongs?"

"No, I saw him lying on the grass as I was walking along the road. I was going to Trenton to try and get a job in the potteries there. But I'd like to find out how he gets along."

"You shall. Sit down on the porch here while I take your coat in and hang it by the stove to dry. I'll send Tim for the doctor at once."

When Mrs. Raynor returned up stairs a little later, Florence met her at the door of her brother's room, where Rex had been carried, Bert being away at boarding school.

"He's very sick, don't you think, mama?" she asked.

"I'm afraid so, my dear. I want to do all I can for him. I can't help thinking how grateful I should be to have any one do as much for our Bert."

"And see what nice clothes he wears," went on Florence in the same whispering tone. "How do you suppose he ever got into association with that fellow down stairs?"

"Hush, dear," cautioned her mother. "Behind those poor clothes is a very warm heart."

"But is he going to stay, too?" went on Florence.

"He wants to. Perhaps we can find something for him to do about the garden."

"Do you think he's honest, though?"

"We must run our chances on that. He is certainly very different from most fellows of his appearance."

The doctor arrived inside of an hour. He made an examination and then reported that Rex was in for a bad case of intermittent fever.

"He may not be able to be moved for six weeks," he added.

And Rex knew nothing of it, but began to toss in the delirium of his fever, living over again some of the bitter experiences of the past few hours.

CHAPTER XXII

SEARCHING FOR REX

"WHAT train did Rex say he would be back on, Roy?"

This was the question asked by Mrs. Pell at the breakfast table on the morning that Rex was trudging along the dusty road between New York and Philadelphia.

"He didn't say," replied Roy. "He'll surely be home by lunch, though. Scott is going to West Chester with his mother at noon."

Lunch hour arrived and still no Reginald. But Mrs. Pell did not worry. He had so many friends in Marley that there were plenty of places where he might have gone from the Bowmans'.

But when dinner time came and he had not yet appeared, the entire family began to speculate on the reasons for it.

"He's probably at the Minturns," said Sydney, when informed of the facts. "Charlie may have persuaded him to stay over another night with him."

"Rex should have sent us word then," rejoined his mother.

Another day passed, and by this time Mrs. Pell began to grow seriously alarmed.

"You must go down to Marley the first thing in the morning, Roy," she said.

And Roy went, repairing first to the Bowmans'. He found Scott just about to take his mother out in his cart.

"What have you done with that brother of mine?" Roy began when greetings had been exchanged.

"And I'd like to know why that brother of yours doesn't permit himself to be heard from," returned Scott promptly. "He didn't show up Wednesday night nor send me any message explaining why he didn't come."

"Didn't come?" echoed Roy. "Do you mean to say that Rex hasn't been here?"

"Of course he hasn't, and I think it mighty shabby of him."

"Why, that's the queerest thing I ever heard of," said Roy slowly.

"Why is it?"

"Because he started to come down here Wednesday afternoon by the 5:30 express."

"He did?"

It was now Scott's turn to look astonished.

"And you say he never got here?" went on Roy.

"Of course he didn't. You don't suppose we have him smuggled away somewhere, do you?"

"Haven't you any idea where your brother is?" here interrupted Mrs. Bowman.

"We were sure he was here, somewhere in Marley," answered Roy. "But he can't be, if he didn't come to you first."

"What could have happened to the fellow?" said Scott, beginning to see that the matter was more serious than he had at first supposed.

"I can't imagine. It's the strangest thing I ever heard of." Roy looked really worried. "I thought he might possibly be at the Minturns', but he wouldn't have gone there till he had been here."

"Let down that seat behind, jump in, and I'll drive you over there," said Scott.

But Charlie had not seen or heard from Rex in ten days, nor was news to be obtained of him from any other of his Marley friends. Roy went home seriously alarmed.

He hated to bring such a report to his mother, but he knew it would be better that she should be informed of all the facts.

She was somewhat stunned at first at the tidings, but quickly rallied.

"We must find him," she said. "Something has happened to him. Did you think to ask Apgar if he remembered seeing Rex on his train Wednesday night?"

Apgar was the conductor on the 5:30 express.

"No, I'll go down to the station and ask him this afternoon before he goes out."

Roy returned with the announcement that Apgar was sure Rex had not been on his train.

"Then there is only one other theory." Mrs. Pell looked very grave as she spoke.

"What is that, mother?"

She did not reply at once. Reginald was very dear to her. She hated to expose his failings even to his own brother. But it must be done.

"You remember, Roy," she went on, "how he teased me to let him go to New Haven with young Harrington? It is possible he may have gone after all. I wish you would go in next door and see if you can find out."

Roy instantly recalled the three dollars Rex had borrowed from him, but he said nothing of it. He went at once to make his call next door.

He asked for Mrs. Harrington, telling the servant that he wished to see her on a matter of importance. He sent up his name, Roy Pell.

"You are the young man my son speaks of," said Mrs. Harrington when she appeared in the great drawing room, and put up her lorgnette to survey her caller.

"No, that is Reginald, my brother. I called in to find out if he went off to New Haven with your son."

"What! you know nothing of his whereabouts yourselves?"

Mrs. Harrington did not seek to conceal her surprise. Roy felt humiliated, but there was nothing for it but to admit the fact.

"We are afraid he may have gone off without my mother's leave," he said. "He was very anxious to

go with your son. He had an invitation to go down to Marley the same day. We thought he had gone, but we find now that he has not been there."

"Your mother did not wish him to go with Dudley, you say?"

There was a trace of severity in Mrs. Harrington's tones.

"She thought he had better not. He is much older than Rex. Do you know whether or not they went off together?"

"I heard Dudley say something about having invited young Pell to go to New Haven with him. They went to the station together."

"Then Rex must have gone. I am very sorry to have troubled you, Mrs. Harrington." Roy now made a little bow, and he hurried off.

"Then he wanted that three dollars from me to spend on the trip," he was saying to himself. "But that wouldn't have been enough. He must have used the money he said he was saving up for mother's present. Ah, Reggie, I didn't think it of you!"

When he told the news at home there was a good deal of discussion concerning what ought to be done about it.

"Let him alone," suggested Jess. "He feels bad enough about it by this time."

"But I don't know when he will be back," said Mrs. Pell.

Eva suggested that they write him a letter in care of young Harrington and request him to come home

at once, but it was Sydney's idea that was acted on.

A telegraphic dispatch was sent to Dudley Harrington, Yale, New Haven.

"Is Reginald Pell with you?" it ran.

The answer came duly, "No, he is not."

The family looked at one another, consternation depicted in their faces. Sydney tried to comfort them by explaining that doubtless Harrington was inclined to be very literal under the circumstances and that Rex was not with him because he had just started for home.

But Mrs. Pell was not content to rest under this uncertainty. Another message was sent to New Haven reading thus:

"Did Reginald Pell start away from Philadelphia with you?"

The response to this was one word, "Yes."

The Pells were now really alarmed. It was decided that Sydney should start the first thing Saturday morning for New Haven, but Friday night he was seized with another of his bad turns, which had been growing more and more frequent of late. Roy offered to go in his place, and Mrs. Pell consented to the substitution.

So Roy set out and reached New Haven in the course of the afternoon. He would have enjoyed the trip if his mind had not been so worried about Rex. He found Harrington's room with little trouble.

He heard the notes of the banjo issuing from in-

side. He had to knock hard before he could make himself heard.

There were three fellows there, two of them in the luxuriously cushioned window seat. Roy was a little dazzled by the unexpected splendor of the room.

He knew Harrington, of course, the fellow in the blue striped blazer. He went up to the collegian at once.

"I guess you know me," he said. "I'm Roy Pell, Rex's brother. I came up to find out what you could tell me about him."

The three fellows exchanged glances.

"Why, isn't he home?" answered Harrington.

"No. When did he leave New Haven?"

"He hasn't been to New Haven," replied Harrington slowly.

"Not been here!" exclaimed Roy. "Where did you leave him, then?"

"In New York."

"When?"

"Wednesday night."

"Was he going home?"

"I don't know," and Harrington looked confused as he made this unsatisfactory answer.

CHAPTER XXIII

A TELEGRAM

Roy saw at a glance that something was being concealed from him.

"How is it you don't know where Rex went when he left you?" he inquired.

"Well, I didn't see which way he went when he left the hotel," answered Harrington. "I supposed though, he went home, and am surprised to hear he isn't there. Atkins, here, may be able to tell you more than I can. Mr. Atkins, this is Roy Pell, Reggie's brother."

The pleasantest faced fellow in the room came forward and put out his hand.

"I'm glad to meet you, Pell," he said, "and wish I could give you some definite information about your brother. I thought with Harri here that he was certainly at home." He glanced over at the other two, who were softly strumming their banjoes in the window seat. "Come across the hall into my room," he added.

"Good day, Mr. Harrington," called out Roy, and followed Atkins.

He could see that Harrington was relieved to have him go.

"Now I'll tell you the straight of it, Pell," began Atkins, when he had invited his visitor to make himself comfortable in one of the many lounging chairs with which the apartment abounded. "You see, Harrington brought your brother to one of the pre-term time jollifications some of the fellows think they must have before coming up here. I was there. I didn't care about going very much, but my room mate would go, and I went to take care of him more than anything else.

"Well, all the fellows except your brother and myself were more than half seas over before midnight. He became disgusted and got out. I was busy with Cheever, and didn't have time to question him. Naturally Harrington feels a little sore over the thing. But he hadn't any idea your brother hadn't gone home till he got your telegrams."

"But Rex — where do you suppose he is all this time?" Roy was terribly anxious. The whole affair was much worse than he had anticipated.

He was glad of one thing, though; that Rex had been disgusted with the orgy.

"I wish I could tell you," answered Atkins. "I managed to get Cheever over to our house before morning. I don't know what Harrington said about young Pell's disappearance when he came to himself."

"What did Reggie want to go with such fellows

for?" groaned Roy. "But the wonder to me is why Harrington ever took him up. There must be at least five years' difference in their ages."

"Oh, Harri appeared to be quite fond of him. I guess your brother flattered him some. Dudley can stand a deal of that."

"But I must find Rex. I'm sure he hadn't money enough to keep him all this while. And I don't know where to look first."

"I wish I could help you," returned Atkins. "I tell you what I'll do. I'll get ready now and go down to New York with you. You can come to our house and stay over Sunday with me. My father is a lawyer. He may be able to tell us what to do. What do you say?"

"You're awfully kind," returned Roy. "But I don't like to intrude."

"It won't be intruding. The pater likes me to bring fellows with me. I wasn't going this week, but that won't matter. He'll be glad to see me. You'll come, won't you?"

Roy thanked him again and accepted. He liked the genial hearted fellow as much as Rex had done.

On the way down Atkins told him of the devices for disposing of the punch.

"You don't suppose the glass he drank went to his head so as to do him any injury, do you?" asked Roy.

Atkins reassured him on this point, and then suggested that they had better go to the hotel where the

jollification had been held to see if any trace of Rex could be obtained there.

But the clerk informed them that no such person had hired a room.

That evening they discussed the matter with Judge Atkins without telling the details of the jollification, which doubtless he was astute enough to guess at. The result was that messages were sent to all the police precincts, and a detective was put on the case.

Roy sent a telegram to his mother Saturday night making it as hopeful as he could, but his own heart was growing heavier and heavier.

Atkins did his best to cheer him up, and under other circumstances Roy would have had a most enjoyable time. But he could not keep his thoughts from Rex.

He went home on Monday, fearful of the meeting with his mother. He felt at times as if the worst news, if it might be but definite, would be better to carry home than those tidings he must take, which would keep them all in such awful suspense.

Sydney had recovered, but the shock of Roy's announcement threw him back into a relapse. And yet he insisted on seeing Roy.

"Mr. Tyler's money has not made us happy after all, has it, Roy?" he said, after the sad affair had been talked over.

"I was afraid that it wouldn't, Syd. Still, this might have happened just the same. You have not been well though, old fellow, since that night you came over to Burdock to make the old man's will."

"Have you noticed that, Roy?" said Sydney quickly.

"Yes, it seems, as you say, that we must pay up for having the money in some way. But where can poor Rex be? I wonder if he is ashamed or afraid to come home?"

Anxiously the reports from the detectives were awaited. But when they came they were only depressing. Positively no trace of the missing boy could be found.

Advertisements were inserted in the New York and Philadelphia papers, but nothing came of them. The family were by this time well nigh distracted. They had not even the poor satisfaction of mourning the lost as one dead. They could only wait and hope, but as the days passed into a week, this last seemed futile.

The time came for school to open, but Roy had little heart to go alone. Still, he must attend to his education.

The first week of it dragged slowly by. Some of his Marley friends wanted him to come down there and spend his Saturday.

He had not yet decided Friday night whether he wanted to go, when the door bell rang, and a messenger appeared with a telegram for Roy Pell.

It was dated at some town in Jersey of which he had never heard, and was very brief, but the one word signed to it was worth a hundred lines, for that name was "Rex."

"All safe. Will write soon."

That was all, and when he read it to the family, the wild exclamations of joy were succeeded by perplexed impatience.

"Why didn't he tell us where to find him?" Eva wanted to know.

"Why didn't he send word to mother?" added Jess.

"Why does he not explain his long silence?" said Mrs. Pell fearing the worst.

Sydney was away at Harrisburg, and Roy decided that instead of going to Marley the following day, he would find out where this New Jersey town was and hunt up Rex at once.

Mrs. Pell wanted to go with him, but Roy reminded her that he might have considerable difficulty in tracing Rex, so it was decided that she wait until she heard from him.

From a railroad time table Roy ascertained where he must go, and by the first train he could get in the morning he set out.

"Be very gentle with him, Roy," his mother said at parting. "By his sending to you he evidently thinks I am greatly displeased with him."

"Trust me, mother," Roy assured her with a smile.

He felt very happy this morning, happier than he had, it seemed to him, since they had come into their fortune. Of such worth is sorrow sometimes, to make a contrast by which to intensify joy.

On arriving at his destination he went to the man in the ticket office and put the following inquiry:

"Do you know anybody in the place named Reginald Pell?"

"No," was the reply. "Has he lived here long?"

"No, he doesn't really live here. He's my twin brother, you see, and I have a telegram from him, but he didn't say where he was staying. Is this a very big place?"

The ticket agent smiled. "Well, it isn't exactly a metropolis," he said.

"Thank you," responded Roy, and he walked out of the rear door toward the dusty road, thinking he was not going to have such an easy job to find Rex after all, if he was in the town where he was supposed to be.

The station was built at a little distance from the town proper. Roy walked on along a board walk until he came to the first house, one of those white, green shuttered affairs whose number is legion in the rural districts.

A woman without a hat on was sweeping the leaves from the path that led down to the gate. The lines about her mouth were rather stern, but Roy made up his mind to begin with her.

CHAPTER XXIV

FOUND AT LAST

"Excuse me," began Roy, leaning over the gate and taking off his broad brimmed straw hat, "do you know a boy named Rex Pell?"

He had decided that this would be the shortest way of getting at things.

The woman looked up quickly, resting her chin on the top of her broom handle.

"Do you think I look as if I knew much about boys?" she replied. "Well, I don't and I don't want to."

"Excuse me," said Roy, and he hurried on, glad to get away.

The next house was a larger one. There was a good deal of piazza around it and some pretensions were made at keeping the lawn in good condition.

Roy's knock at the door was answered so promptly that he was fain to believe that some one must have been peeping through the shutters watching his approach.

A tall woman with light hair received him very effusively.

"I've been expecting you," she said, with an expansive smile. "I thought you'd come on that train."

"This must be the place," thought Roy. "She knows Rex sent the dispatch and thought some of us would come on."

"I suppose you'd like to go straight up stairs?" she continued, when she had taken his hat and hung it on the stand in the hall.

"Yes, I would," and Roy's heart sank.

Rex must be sick, he decided, and not able to leave his bed. He followed the light haired woman to the floor above, where she threw open the door of a room with a sort of flourish.

Roy halted on the threshold. There was a double bed inside, but nobody on it nor was anybody to be seen in the apartment.

"Where is my brother?" he asked.

"Your brother?" exclaimed the woman. "I did not understand that there were two of you. Your father's letter mentioned only one son. Wait, I will get—"

"No, there must be some mistake," Roy interposed. "I thought my brother, Rex Pell, might be here."

"What, you are not Eric Levens, then?"

"No, indeed, and don't you know anything about my brother? I am so sorry."

"I thought you were the young gentleman I expected who was to look at this room to see whether he liked it well enough to stay while his father went to Europe. But why are you sorry that I do not

know anything about your brother? Have you lost him?"

"In a sort of a way, yes," and Roy told his story, or as much of it as he could, without bringing in the fact of Rex's having run away from home.

"Oh, I guess I can help you," exclaimed the woman, when he had finished. "Maybe he is the young fellow who is staying at the Raynors'. I heard about it last Sunday at church."

"About *it?* About what?"

Roy's face grew pale. The woman looked a little uncomfortable.

"Don't be too anxious," she replied. "He must be better now if he could send a message. But he's had the intermittent fever. He was found on the piazza of the house one rainy evening about ten days ago, by Florence Raynor. A trampish looking young fellow had carried him in out of the wet, and they say he's been devoted to him ever since."

"Where do the Raynors live?" asked Roy, already impatient to be off.

"Come here to the window and I can show you the house. It is clear at the end of this street beyond all the others. You can just see the chimneys above the trees."

Roy was soon hurrying away in the direction pointed out.

Although he feared that Rex might have been ill, the certainty of it made his heart very sore for his brother.

"Sick among strangers!" was his thought. "I wish mother had come with me."

A young girl was reading on the piazza when he opened the gate and walked up the path between the box hedges.

"Is my brother Rex here?" he said, pausing at the foot of the steps, his hat in his hand.

She had raised her head as the gate latch clicked, and now their eyes met. Even in that moment Roy noted how very pretty she was.

"You are the Roy that he sent the telegram to?" she exclaimed. Then paused suddenly, and blushed.

"Yes, I'm Roy, and I've had a hard time to find him. How is he?"

"He's better. He was asleep just now. If you will come in I will call mother."

"Rex has certainly fallen into good hands," thought Roy when he was left alone.

Mrs. Raynor came out in a moment and greeted Roy most cordially.

"I'm glad you came," she said. "It will do your brother good to see you."

"You've been very, very kind to him," answered Roy.

"No; it wasn't any trouble, because we all took to him so. It was a pleasure to do for him."

"But why didn't he let us know before where he was?" asked Roy.

"Bless you, he only knew himself yesterday. He's had a hard tug of it, and not a scrap or a card could

we find about him, only the letters R. B. P. on his linen."

"Then he's been out of his head?"

"Yes; and you must be prepared to find him greatly changed. But he'll come around again all right, the doctor says. I'll go up now and see if he is awake and call you."

The summons to ascend came a few minutes later, and presently Roy found himself standing by his brother's bedside. Mrs. Raynor considerately withdrew and left the two together, warning them that she should be back in ten minutes to prevent her patient from becoming unduly excited.

Rex had changed. There was no longer any plumpness in his cheeks, and his face was very white. But so were his teeth, and his eyes were as lustrous as ever.

"Roy!" He uttered the one word in a weak voice, and held tightly in both of his the hands that his brother extended to him.

A moment of the precious ten was lost to silence as the two looked at each other, but in that look was that which hours of speech could not have expressed. Roy read in it true repentance, a pleading for forgiveness, and Rex saw that there was no chiding for him from those at home, only love and pity.

"Do you know all, Roy; the very worst?" Rex then whispered.

"Don't think of that now, Reggie. It is all right. I want to talk about yourself — your sickness."

"But I must think of it. I have been thinking of it ever since I came to my senses yesterday. Did you know that I told you lies, that I acted them, that I took the money I had been saving up for mother's present to pay the expenses of this wretched trip?"

"But you didn't go all the way, Reggie. I found that out. You turned back. What happened to you then?"

Rex told the terrible tale of the robbery, of the awful night he had passed riding back and forth across the river, and had got as far as his falling asleep on the train when Mrs. Raynor appeared and smilingly announced that time was up.

"Miles will tell you the rest, Roy," said Rex. "He's the best fellow. I don't know what would have become of me if it hadn't been for him. And Mrs. Raynor, too. When I get well they must all come to Philadelphia and we'll give them the very best time."

There was a touch of his old self in the heartiness with which he uttered these words. Roy's coming and comforting words had lifted a heavy burden from his heart.

They left him to try to get to sleep again. Roy went down stairs with Mrs. Raynor.

"I ought to go home at once and tell my mother about Rex," he said.

"Why not send a message and stay with him?" suggested the other. "We should be very glad to have you. There is plenty of room in the house.

Or send word for your mother to come on. I know she must be anxious to see her son."

Roy hesitated. He scarcely knew what to do. Then he remembered Sydney's absence and reflected that the girls could not very well be left alone. He decided to stay himself till Monday, and to send word that Rex was all right now.

He hurried off to the station to write his dispatch and came back as quickly to the Raynors'. He recollected that he had not yet seen the Miles of whom Rex spoke, the fellow who could tell him the continuation of his brother's adventures.

He asked Florence, whom he found on the lawn, where he could find Miles.

"He's out in the field now," she replied, "digging potatoes. But it's almost twelve. He'll be in then for his dinner. He just adores that brother of yours."

"But who is he?" Roy persisted.

"Well, he hasn't told us his story yet. We took him on trust, and he's turned out all right so far. But there he comes now."

"Excuse me," said Roy. "I'll go and see him." And he hurried off around the corner of the house.

The next minute he stood face to face with the youth who is destined to play a highly important part in the remainder of this tale.

CHAPTER XXV

MILES HARDING'S STORY

MILES knew Roy at once.

"This is Miles, isn't it?" said Roy in his pleasant way, and he put out his hand.

"Yes, but wait a minute."

Miles hurried to the pump near the kitchen door. He gave his hands a douse of water, dried them quickly on a roller towel in the woodshed, and then came back to greet the brother of the boy of whom he was so fond.

"You got the telegram all right then?" he said. "Rex was so weak when he told me where to send it, I wasn't sure I'd get it quite right."

"I want to thank you for all you did for him," went on Roy. "He's told me about it, except the details. He said you'd do that — about what happened to him after he got out of the train. But don't let me keep you from your dinner."

"I'd rather talk to you than eat," said Miles frankly.

Mrs. Raynor appeared at this moment and compromised matters by bringing Miles' dinner to him out on the side porch. Roy sat by and listened to the

recital, most modestly given, of the facts with which the reader is already acquainted.

It was time for Miles to return to his work when it was finished, and Florence came to summon Roy to their own dinner.

"Isn't he queer?" she said, referring to Miles. "He seems so quiet and talks so well for a man who was — well, a tramp. I don't know what else you could call him. You ought to have seen the clothes he had on when he first came. Mamma made him burn them."

"He looks as if he might have an interesting story to tell," commented Roy.

"We'll get him to tell it to-night if your brother is well enough," said Mrs. Raynor. "He promised that we should hear it as soon as Rex was able to listen too."

Roy took Rex's dinner up to him, and the twins had an hour to themselves, during which Rex went more into detail concerning his experiences with Harrington and his crowd. They compared notes on Harry Atkins, and then fell to talking of Miles Harding.

"He's something more than a common tramp," Rex insisted. "He can read a little and write some. Isn't it funny how much he thinks of me, when I haven't done a thing for him? Mrs. Raynor lets him come up and sit with me every evening when his work is done. Of course I didn't know this till yesterday, when I came to my senses."

After the doctor's visit about three, Rex went to sleep and Roy played a game of tennis with Florence.

"I don't want to seem glad that your brother is sick," she said, "but it's awfully nice to have company. I get so lonely when Bert is away."

That evening they all assembled in Rex's room — Mrs. Raynor was a widow, so the family at home consisted only of herself and Florence — and Miles, seated at the foot of the bed, told the story of his life.

"I don't know where I was born," he began. "The first thing I can remember is living in a tenement house in New York, where I had to sleep three in a bed with the two Morrisey boys. Mr. Morrisey was a truckman, and there was five children of them, and I made six. I always thought I was a Morrisey, too, till one day Jimmy, he got mad at me, and told me I needn't talk so big because I was only living on charity.

"I went to his mother and asked her about it, and she told me that it was true, that I wasn't really her child, but that she thought as much of me as if I was, and that there wasn't any charity about it. But I wanted to know all about myself, and at last she said that I'd been given to Mr. Morrisey when I was a wee baby by a friend of his who couldn't afford to keep me and who made him vow that he'd never tell where I came from.

"Jimmy only found it out by accident one night, listening to his father and mother talking when they

thought he was asleep. She said I wasn't to feel bad about it; because they thought everything of me.

"But I did feel bad about it. It seemed too hard when the Morriseys had all they could do to get along they should have one more mouth — and that not a Morrisey one — to feed.

"I studied as hard as I could at school, so as to try and get through sooner and go to work and begin to pay them back, but when I was twelve Mr. Morrisey was kicked to death by a horse and the next year Mrs. Morrisey married a man who took her and the children out to Dakota to live.

"She wanted me to go along, but I knew Mr. Rollings didn't like me, and besides I wanted to stay East where there was some chance of my finding out who my parents were. I got a place as cash boy in a Japanese store and boarded with some people who lived across the hall from where the Morriseys had their rooms.

"But Mr. Benton used to get drunk and when he was that way he'd beat me, just for the fun of it, it seemed to me. Then when they cut down the number of boys employed in the store and I couldn't find another place right away, he growled so about my not paying my board that I did my things up in a bundle one night and hid myself on a canal boat down at the East River docks.

"The captain was awful mad when he found me after we had got clear up the North River. He gave me a good thrashing and then said he was going to

drop me overboard. But he didn't and I stayed on board all that season, driving mules and being sworn at and kicked and trounced like any other boy on the canal. I sometimes wonder why I didn't wear out.

"When navigation closed I was set adrift, and had a hard scrub of it to get along for a time. I almost starved for a while in Albany, trying to pick up odd jobs. Then I came near freezing to death.

"Finally I got a place as errand boy in a grocery store and kept that till some money was missing and they said I took it. I never stole in my life. Mrs. Morrisey brought me up too well for me to do that. But I couldn't prove I didn't and I had to go. The man said I ought to consider myself lucky I wasn't sent to jail.

"After that I had a worse time of it than ever. Whenever I applied for a position they wanted to know why I had left my last place. And when I told them, they wouldn't have anything to do with me.

"Then came the days when sometimes I thought I might as well steal. I was suffering because I was accused of doing it. When I was very hungry and saw chances of sneaking apples out of grocerymen's barrels, it seemed as if I had almost a right to do it. But I never did.

"Something always turned up to keep me from starving. Once a woman stopped me in the street and gave me a dollar. She said I looked so hungry she couldn't go by me without doing it.

"Another time I was taken sick in one of the parks, something like Rex. I fell down in a kind of faint, and when I came to I was in a hospital and I stayed there quite a little while.

"After I got out it was spring and I thought I'd try the country. I didn't beg; only asked for work. Sometimes I got it; many more times I didn't.

"Now and then if they didn't give me work they'd offer me milk or a cup of coffee, so I managed to pull through somehow.

"At last I got back to New York. I'd been wanting to get there again ever since the thought came to me one day that perhaps some friends of Mr. Morrisey's might know something about the man who had given me to him when I was a baby.

"With a good deal of trouble I found one of them. He was a bricklayer, and he told me as near as he could remember the man who gave me to Tim Morrisey was from Philadelphia, and that's all he knew.

"Then I wanted to go to Philadelphia.

"'But what good will that do you, Miles?" Mr. Beesley asked. 'You can't find out any more there, nor as much, as you can here.'

"'No,' I told him, 'but if I'm there maybe somebody else'll find out something from passing me in the street.'

"'That's an idea, sure enough,' he said, so I started for Philadelphia, and that's how I came to fall in with Rex."

Miles finished his story with this word. It almost

seemed as if he had done it on purpose, planning for it, as it were. He always spoke the name with a little pause before it, as if it were something sacred.

Rex had told him to call him by it the day before when he had started in to address him as "Mr. Pell." All of Reginald's striving after premature manhood had been left in that past which preceded his experiences in the hotel at New York.

CHAPTER XXVI

IN WINTER DAYS

MILES's story had been listened to with the closest attention by all the little party.

"It's just like a chapter out of a book," Florence whispered to Roy. "I wonder if he'll ever find out who he really is?"

"But how did you come by the name Harding?" Roy inquired. "Weren't you Miles Morrisey once?"

"Yes, but when they went away, and I got to having such hard knocks from the world, I didn't want to drag the name down with me, and so I thought Harding would suit me pretty well, and took it."

Rex seemed inclined to grow excited over the theme, so Mrs. Raynor proposed an immediate adjournment.

"To-morrow is Sunday," she said, "and Miles can have a long day with you."

In the course of this long day, the wanderer told Roy why he had been so drawn to Rex.

"I'd seen lots of nice looking fellows like him," he said, "but they always looked down on me and kind of kept off, as if they didn't want me to touch

them with my dirty clothes. But I had to touch Rex when he fell over, and he didn't seem to mind it."

Rex flushed when Roy told him this.

"I'm afraid I didn't seem to mind because I was too far gone to mind anything," he said. "But I do like Miles and would like to do all I can for him."

Roy returned home Monday morning, and Mrs. Pell went out to Rex that night. He improved rapidly, and within a fortnight was able to be moved to Philadelphia.

It was pitiable to see the effect of the parting on Miles. The Raynors had found him very capable and were anxious to keep him. There was no reason why he should not stay, except his desire to be where Rex was, and his quixotic notion that he might meet his father or mother should he go to Philadelphia.

"Keep a look out for me, Rex," he said, "and if you hear of any position you think I could fill, let me know."

Rex promised, and after he got home told his mother that when she could make up her mind to completely forgive him for all he had done, he wished that she would think of something they could do for Miles.

"I have forgiven you already, Reggie," was the reply. "I know that you have suffered enough not to need any other lesson. Now, why not make Miles a present of a complete outfit? Wouldn't he take it all right? Then when he is properly fitted out, you can invite him on here for Thanksgiving day."

Rex talked over the idea with Roy and then they wrote to Mrs. Raynor about it. The end of the matter was that they procured Miles's measure, and sent him the things as a present from Rex.

The invitation for Thanksgiving was in the letter that accompanied them.

The young fellow's gratitude was beyond the power of expression, and over and over again he asked Mrs. Raynor if she thought it was right for him to accept the invitation.

"Of course it is right," she told him. "They would not have asked you if they had not wanted you."

His happiness seemed to shine out of every feature of his face when he boarded the Philadelphia train Wednesday afternoon. Rex met him at the station, and was surprised to see what a good looking fellow he made when he was properly rigged out.

"Maybe I'll make some awful blunders," Miles confided to him on the way to the house. "Remember I've never been with swell folks before."

"We're not swell," Rex laughed.

He had half a mind to let him know then and there where they got their money, but decided that he wouldn't. That night he took his guest to the theater, and the next day Sydney had a long talk with him.

His manners were much easier among the unaccustomed surroundings than Rex had dared to hope they would be. Mrs. Pell was very much attracted

by him, and both girls declared he was "so interesting."

In his talk with him Sydney sought to draw out all the facts he could about the Morriseys.

"That boy you had the fight with, Miles," he said —"Jimmy, I think you told Rex his name was — did you never ask him any questions about what he overheard that night?"

"No. Mr. Morrisey seemed not to want me to talk about it, and besides, I never would have asked Jimmy after what had happened."

"But you'd ask him now, wouldn't you?" went on Sydney. "You say that you heard his mother was dead. He seems to be the only person left from whom you can get a clew."

"Yes, I'd ask him now if I had the chance," Miles admitted. "But I don't know just where he is. You see, I've lost track of the Morriseys lately."

"But you could find it again couldn't you? Write to the place where you heard they were last. Where was that?"

"Bismarck."

"Very good. Do that, and when you have found out all you can from Jimmy, let me know."

Miles promised to attend to this, but since he had fallen in with Rex, his desire to hunt up his parents seemed not as strong as it had been. He went back to the Raynors enthusiastic over his visit, and talked of it for weeks afterward.

Meanwhile Roy and Rex settled down to their

school life. The change made in Rex by his New York experience was quite noticeable. While retaining all his dignity of manner, he was more thoughtful of the feelings of others than he had been.

He worried a good deal at first about the opinion Scott Bowman must have of him, and truth to tell Scott did feel a little sore over the way he had been treated.

The two boys did not write or see each other till they met accidentally in the street at Christmas time.

Rex saw Scott coming and grew red in spite of himself. There was a chance, he felt, that the other might go by without speaking to him. But Scott halted and put out his hand.

"Hello, Rex," he said, "you *are* a stranger."

And at these words a great burden was lifted from Reginald's mind.

The truth of the matter was, it was very difficult to keep at odds with a fellow with the fascinating personality of Rex Pell, and now since the recent change in him he was more attractive than ever. He took Scott home to lunch with him, and related in detail his adventures on his memorable trip.

"Where the fun in being 'tough' comes in," he concluded, "I don't see."

At Christmas time Mrs. Pell had Mrs. Raynor and Florence in for a visit.

"Has Miles heard from Jimmy Morrisey yet?" Rex inquired.

"No," Florence replied. "He didn't write till about three weeks ago."

"You'll let him come in and see us New Year's, won't you?" Rex went on.

"Yes indeed, if you would like to have him."

Miles came for New Year's and brought the information that he had heard from Jimmy Morrisey at last. He was a hall boy in a New York hotel, and said that as near as he could remember the name he had heard his father mention that night in his talk with his mother was Darley.

Rex wrote the name down on a piece of paper and put it away to show to Sydney on his return from his Florida trip, for his health had been growing steadily poorer and Mrs. Pell had persuaded him finally to go South with a friend for a while.

"You know he isn't really my own brother," Rex confided to Miles. "But he's a distant relative. His father and mother died when he was very little."

Miles was much interested on hearing this. It served in some way to establish another bond between himself and the Pells.

"I'll let you know what Syd finds out about this as soon as he finds out anything," Rex told Miles at parting.

Miles had begun to attend school. He had not had an opportunity to study since leaving the Morriseys. He was naturally quick, and made good progress.

"He'll know too much by spring to be put to gar-

den work again," Mrs. Raynor had said when she was in. "I hardly know what to do with him then."

"Oh, don't worry about that," laughed Jess. "By that time he may have found his parents and be a millionaire."

"How you talk, Jess," interposed her sister. "If he ever does find his people, it doesn't follow that they will be wealthy. Indeed, he'd probably never have been given to the Morriseys if his father hadn't been too poor to support him."

Eva took a deep interest in the case. She was of a literary turn of mind, and wove many a romance in her busy brain about the early history of this strange youth, who seemed so extraordinarily gentle, considering his rough bringing up.

Sydney came home just before the twins' vacation ended.

"Oh, Syd!" Rex suddenly exclaimed, that first evening as they were all seated in the library, listening to Florida experiences. "Miles has heard from this Morrisey boy."

"Well," replied Sydney, "did he learn anything of importance?"

"Yes, he found out the name his father and mother used when they were talking about the man who brought Miles to them."

"And what was it?"

"Darley."

Sydney fell back in his chair and grew as white as a ghost.

CHAPTER XXVII

SYDNEY GOES ON A MYSTERIOUS EXPEDITION

THE family were greatly alarmed at Sydney's collapse. Mrs. Pell had fondly hoped that his Southern trip would be of permanent benefit to him, and here he was breaking down on the first night of his return.

Not one of them associated his seizure in any way with the subject on which they had been talking except Rex. He could not but recall a somewhat similar attack, when Sydney had fainted in his office while he (Rex) was telling Scott Bowman of their inheritance.

But Miles Harding's affairs had nothing to do with this. What did it all mean? Rex asked himself, as he sped off for the doctor.

When he got back, Sydney had come to, but seemed to be suffering severely. And yet when asked if he was in pain, he would shake his head and beg so imploringly that they would leave him to himself, that the fears of the family were intensified many fold.

The doctor was utterly nonplused. He prescribed a quieting potion, and went away, promising to return again in the morning.

"And perhaps you had better humor him in his desire to be left alone," he said to Mrs. Pell. "But of course arrange to be near in case another collapse occurs."

The household separated for bed that night with sober faces.

"Syd hasn't been like himself since Mr. Tyler died," remarked Roy, lingering at the door of Rex's room.

Rex did not reply immediately. He stood looking at his brother intently for an instant, then he put a hand on Roy's shoulder, gently pulled him into the room and closed the door behind him.

"Sit down a minute, Roy," he said gravely; "I want to tell you something."

"What is it? What makes you look so solemn, Reggie? Is it anything about Syd?"

"Yes, it's about Syd. Something that happened last summer, and which he told me not to tell; but it seems to me that I ought to tell now."

In a few words then, Rex related what he and Scott Bowman had witnessed, adding an account of what Sydney had said to him when he asked to have the doctor sent out of the room.

"It's queer, isn't it, Roy?" Rex added.

"Yes, but I can't connect it with the present case."

"Neither can I. That makes it queerer still. Per-

haps you'd better not say anything about what I told you."

"No, I shan't," and the boys sat quiet a while longer, discussing the mystery of this affair in lowered tones.

Meanwhile Sydney in his room across the hall, was lying in his bed with his eyes wide open staring at the ceiling. Now and then he passed his hand across his forehead, on which the perspiration kept gathering.

"It is Nemesis," he murmured over and over. "I have felt that it would come, and now at last it has appeared, and through Rex, of all the others!"

All through that night he remained thus wakeful. He watched, helplessly, the gradual breaking of the dawn, knowing that he had not slept a moment and feeling that he must have this physical ill to bear in addition to the mental one which already weighed him down to the earth.

But he had come to the turning point now. In some way this was a relief, even though the prospect immediately ahead of him was such a fearsome one.

He wished that he could go up to the office without seeing any of the family, as he had done that other morning in Marley.

But he could not do this now. They would worry and send after him. He must try and get through the ordeal of facing them as best he could.

He rose at the usual time, but before he had fin-

ished dressing there was a knock at the door and Roy's voice wanting to know how he was.

"All right," he replied, and then, as his brother asked if he might come in, he opened the door.

"All right!" exclaimed Roy, after one look at his face, "Oh, Syd!"

"It's only because I haven't slept," Sydney hastened to assure him.

"Then what are you getting up for?" Roy went on.

"I must go down town. I have that to do which will ease my mind, and *make me all right again, I trust.*"

The last words were added in so low a tone as to be scarcely audible.

"Oh, Syd, what is it? What is worrying you? Can't I help you in any way?"

"No, Roy, you cannot now. Perhaps — later — I will need — need your pity."

"Pity! Oh, Syd, you do not know what you say."

"Don't, Roy. I have a hard task to perform; do not, I beg of you, make it harder."

Roy said no more; he would not after this. He went back to his own room and went over in his mind all that had befallen them since they had been what the world called wealthy.

"Not one bit happier, though; no, not as happy," he added for himself.

At the breakfast table Sydney insisted that he felt plenty well enought to go to the office.

"Can't you see, mother," he said at last, "that it is a matter of the mind and not of the body. Let me have the opportunity of easing that, and — you will see the result."

But when he left the house he did not go at once to his office. He stopped at the first drug store he passed, and walked up to the little stand on which the city directory was kept.

He turned the pages to D, and then looked up Darley.

There were several of the name, and a frown contracted his brow. But he took out his pencil and memorandum book, and made a note of the various addresses. Then he went on, but soon turned into a street that would not take him to the office.

He boarded a car and rode off in the direction of South street. In the course of twenty minutes he was waiting for his ring to be answered at the door of a very modest little house near the Baltimore tracks.

But after he had been admitted, he did not remain long inside.

"I must try another," he muttered, consulting his memorandum.

He tried several others, but with equal ill success. The quest seemed hopeless.

"There may be nothing in it after all," he murmured. "But that does not lighten my load here;" and he pressed his hand over his heart.

All that day he kept up his hunt, scarcely stopping

to get a little lunch at noon. Toward nightfall he called at an address on Seventh Street next to the last on his list.

It was an odd looking house — apparently a store, for there was a regular shop window, but there was nothing in it but curtains that screened off the interior, and no sign, and the door when he tried it, was locked. But there was a bell handle close beside it, and this he pulled.

The door was opened after quite an interval, to a mere crack, and the voice of an aged woman wanted to know who was there.

"A gentleman to see Mr. David Darley," Sydney answered.

"You can't see him," came back the reply. "He's been dead these five months."

"Well, then," went on Sydney, pushing against the door to prevent any possibility of its being shut in his face, "I want to see some of his relations — his wife, or daughter, or somebody."

"There ain't any of them either," was the reply. "There's only me."

"Well, then, I'd like to see you," Sydney rejoined, feeling that this, too, was to be a wild goose chase, but determined, nevertheless, to leave no stone unturned.

"What do you want to see me about?" went on the old lady. "I don't know you."

"I just want to ask you some questions about Mr. Darley. Are you any relation of his?"

"I'm his mother-in-law," and the door was slowly

opened, but only wide enough to admit Sydney, when it was closed behind him with great rapidity.

He looked with some curiosity at the person who admitted him. She was very small, not much above his waist in height, and quite old, with snow white hair and a very peaceful expression of face that contrasted markedly with her evident fear of strangers.

She did not ask Sydney to be seated, and remained standing herself, taking up her station in the doorway that led into the room beyond, as if seeking to bar out any intrusion there.

The apartment in which Sydney found himself was a very pleasant one, well lighted from the large window, whose upper portion was undraped. There were some pictures on the walls, a piano stood at one side, and a guitar could be seen off in one corner.

But Sydney was not in the mood to take many notes of his surroundings. He proceeded at once with the business in hand.

"Was Mr. David Darley any relation to Maurice Darley?" he inquired.

"Will it hurt David if I answer?" replied the old lady cautiously.

"How can it, since you say he is dead?" Sydney responded with the flicker of a smile.

"Well, then," answered the other, heaving a little sigh, "I don't see as it can do any harm for me to say that David was his brother."

"At last," burst forth Sydney with something between a shout and a groan. He put his hand against the wall as if to steady himself.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE STRANGE CONDUCT OF MRS. FOX

ALL the suspicions of the little white haired old lady seemed to be revived by Sydney's manner of receiving the intelligence she gave him.

"Maybe I've made a mistake about it," she said, pinching nervously at the edges of a white apron she wore. "It may be another man of the same name."

"Is this Maurice Darley dead?" asked Sydney, paying no attention to her disturbed equanimity.

"I don't know. Maybe he is," was the reply.

"When did you see him last?" went on Sydney.

"How do you know I ever saw him?" asked the old lady quickly.

Sydney began to lose his patience.

"You seem to think I mean you some harm," he said. "You are quite wrong there. It is a matter of money, of a fortune that belongs to Mr. Maurice Darley, if I can find him."

The old lady looked at him keenly.

"That's what caused all his trouble," she said slowly. "Fortunes. He was always thinking of them."

"Can't you tell me where he is now?" Sydney went

on in a coaxing tone. "You appear to know a good deal about him."

"Oh, Mr.—I? Do I show it?" A terrified look came into the old lady's eyes. Her fingers clutched tightly at each side of the doorway over which she had mounted guard.

Sydney was by this time convinced that there was some mystery about Maurice Darley, which the woman before him was seeking to conceal.

"What if he is dead?"

The old lady brought this out with a sort of triumphant tone.

"But he isn't dead," Sydney returned, with almost the same manner. "If he was you would have said so long ago. You see I can understand some things. But why are you so secret about him? Tell me, did you ever hear him speak of a Mr. Tyler?"

"Hush, hush!" The old lady put her fingers over her lips and advanced to Sydney as if to thurst him out of the door. "Not now. Not here," she added in an imploring tone.

Sydney was compelled to back out of the door into the street, but he held it open partially to say:

"I must find out about Maurice Darley. It is for his good, not mine. Where can I see you about him? Will you come to my office on Chestnut Street?"

"No, no. I can't go away," the old lady replied.

She was glancing backward over her shoulder every instant or two.

"Will you give me your name, then, so I can write

to you?" Sydney went on. "Or if I write to Mr. Darley here will you give it to him?"

"No, only write to me, Mrs. Hannah Fox," and with that the door was closed in his face.

Sydney lingered in front of it a second. He had a blind impulse to ring the bell and compel her to open it again. But he knew that it would be useless, so he turned his steps slowly toward Chestnut street and went to his office.

He found that his absence all day had been productive of not a little harm.

"But this is a part of the expiation," he murmured to himself.

He put aside the letters waiting to be answered, and set himself to the task of composing the one to Mrs. Fox. It took him a long while to write it. He tore up several completed ones.

The usual hour for closing the office arrived. The boy hovered about his desk, seeming to hope that his presence would remind his employer that it was time to go home.

Sydney looked up at last.

"You may go, John," he said. "I will mail this."

But when the boy had gone he read over what he had written, then tore it into very small pieces and dropped them in the waste paper basket. Then he took a fresh sheet and began again.

He was half way down the first page when the door opened and Rex came in.

"Syd," he exclaimed, "aren't you coming home to

dinner? We waited till seven o'clock, then mother grew so worried that I came down to see if anything had happened."

"How good you are to me, Reggie," said the other. "And how little I deserve it."

His head went down on his two arms upon the desk. His frame shook as if with sobbing.

"Syd, you dear old fellow, don't talk that way. What is troubling you?" Rex had put his arm about his brother's neck; his forehead pressed close against the bowed head.

"Don't, Reggie. If you only knew you would not want to touch me."

Sydney lifted his head suddenly, but his arms were still crossed over the half written letter.

"Syd, what do you mean?"

Rex looked at his brother in deep perplexity, his handsome brow wrinkled with the anxiety Sydney's appearance and demeanor were causing him.

"You will know soon enough, Reggie, and then promise me that you will try to think of me as friendly as you can; not give away utterly to your contempt. It was partly for y—. No, I will not say that. No, go home, Rex. Tell mother I am all right, and will be back some time to-night, and not to worry."

"But you ought not to stay here and work, Syd," Rex persisted. "You are not fit to do it."

"I must do what I've set out to do." Sydney's voice was almost stern as he made this reply.

Rex saw that it was useless to linger, and went

sadly home. Something dreadful had evidently come over Sydney. What it was he did not pretend to know. But he made up his mind not to tell the family all that Sydney had said.

It was nearly nine that night before the young lawyer finished the letter to Mrs. Fox to suit him. He dropped it in the corner letter box on his way home, and then stepped in at a restaurant to at least go through the form of eating something.

"When shall I tell them at home about it?" was his one thought, and the ever recurring echo to it was, "Not yet! not yet!"

Almost his greatest trial of the day was forcing himself to remain in the library a half hour after he reached the house, and trying to appear himself. He was conscious that Rex was watching him closely.

But it was natural for him to plead fatigue after a hard day's work. He locked himself in his room after he reached it. With hands tightly pressed against his forehead, he sank into a chair.

"I foresaw all this," he muttered. "I knew that I must always suffer. That what I did was done for others is no excuse; and now they must suffer, too."

He slept this night from sheer exhaustion, but the sleep was much disturbed by dreams, in all of which a white haired old lady with the face of a fox seemed to be trying to do him some bodily injury.

The next day he seemed to exist for nothing but the arrival of the mails. But night came, and no response to his letter to Mrs. Fox.

The following morning he tried to get up, but his head was so dizzy that he was forced to drop back on the pillow again. Fortunately he had not locked his door this time, so that when they came to inquire about him, they were able to get in.

It was Roy who came first.

"My mail from the office," was all Sydney had strength to say when he saw him.

"Yes, I will bring it for you," replied Roy, and he decided to give up school for the day.

The doctor was summoned again, and prescribed perfect quiet, but after he had gone, Sydney asked so persistently if Roy had come with his letters, that when he did arrive, Mrs. Pell thought that the quickest way to quiet the patient was to let him come in with them.

"I only want to see one of them," Sydney whispered quickly, as Rex took a seat by the bedside, some dozen letters in his lap.

"Which one, Syd?" asked Roy, gently.

"It is from an old lady — a Mrs. Fox. It will probably be in a plain envelope."

"Perhaps this is it, then. Shall I open it and see?"

"No, no. Give it to me," replied Sydney quickly.

He took the envelope and the knife Roy handed to him, but his fingers trembled so that he could do nothing.

"I shall have to let you open it after all, Roy," he said, and handed them both back.

Roy slit the end of the envelope in a second, and

once more put it into his brother's hands. With dilated eyes and breath coming in brief gasps, Sydney drew out the inclosure.

He unfolded it and looked eagerly at the signature.

"I can't see quite clearly, Rex," he said after an instant. "Is that Fox signed to this?"

"Yes. Hannah M. Fox."

"Thank you." Sydney turned to the front page and began to read. Suddenly he gave a little cry.

"I can't see the words, Roy," he said. "Something is the matter with my sight. You will have to read it to me. Never mind if some of the things it says sound strange to you. I will explain them by and by. Here."

Roy took the letter, and read as follows:

MR. SYDNEY F. PELL.

DEAR SIR:—Come tomorrow night at midnight. Don't ring. Knock lightly on the door. Yours truly,

HANNAH M. FOX.

"And that is to-night," murmured Sydney. "How can I go?"

CHAPTER XXIX

A MIDNIGHT VISIT

"Do you want me to write a note for you saying you can't come?" said Roy.

"No, no. I must go," replied Sydney.

"But you can't," Roy was about to answer. Then he checked himself, and said instead: "Well, perhaps you will be well enough to go to-night. Is it far?" for there was no address given in the letter.

"No, not very. It is right in the city here. But you can't write for me. The old lady mustn't know that you've seen her letter. She'd notice the difference in the handwriting. But midnight! What a queer time to appoint. It's just like her, though. Now I will try and get some sleep so as to help prepare myself for to-night."

The receipt of the letter appeared to have eased Sydney's mind somewhat, for he slept until well on in the afternoon, and then he woke feeling somewhat better.

"I can go to-night, Roy, after all," he said to his brother cheerfully.

But Roy did not see how he could go. Still he

thought it was best not to say anything till the time came.

Just before night, Sydney called Roy to the bedside.

"Order a coupé for me to be here at half past eleven to-night," he said.

"But you are not fit to go, Syd," the other could not help but respond.

"I will be when the time comes," was the reply. "You will see. Say nothing to the others about it."

"Then let me go with you," suggested Roy.

"Well, perhaps you may, but you will sit in the carriage. Now go out and order it, please."

Roy felt somewhat burdened with a secret to keep from the family. But he trusted Sydney fully, so he felt that it was all right. The patient grew a little better in the evening.

At half past eight he called Roy to him and whispered: "You had better lie down and get some rest now. Take my alarm clock and put it at quarter past eleven."

But Roy knew it was no use to take the clock. He was sure he could not sleep. He was far too anxious and excited for that. He lay down on the sofa in his own room and tried to read. But he did not see a word on the page. He was thinking of Sydney.

Presently Rex came in. He flung himself down on the bed, exclaiming: "Roy, I feel exactly as if something was going to happen. I can't get to sleep, so there's no use in my going to bed. I'm worried about Syd. There is something mighty queer about him."

"Oh, he's much better to-night," Roy responded encouragingly.

"Yes, I know; but it's his actions all through this thing that I'm worried about. Do you know that I sometimes think, Roy—" here Rex sat up on the bed and lowered his voice impressively—"I sometimes think that perhaps there was a touch of insanity in Syd's family. You know we are always forgetting that he isn't one of us."

"Is it anything in particular makes you think that, Reggie?" said Roy, wondering what Rex would say if he knew about that night's expedition.

"Well, yes, one thing taken with a lot of other things," and he proceeded to tell of what Sydney had said to him at the office when he went down there the previous night.

"He seems to have the idea that he has committed some crime," Rex went on. "I really think that we ought to watch him carefully."

"It doesn't seem to me to be as serious as that," responded Roy. "But as you say, we ought to watch him carefully."

Rex lay quiet for a time. Roy's thoughts were disturbing ones. Reginald, too, was worrying over Sydney's condition. But that note from Hannah Fox was something tangible. There was no chimera of the imagination about that.

Perhaps it was a real anxiety that was preying on Syd's mind. Very likely something connected with his parentage.

Roy had not thought of this before. He was about to suggest it to relieve his brother's mind when he looked up and saw that Rex was asleep.

Then he glanced at the clock on the bureau and saw that it pointed to five minutes to eleven.

"I'll let him sleep on now," he decided, "or he'll be sure to be around when we go, and I'm sure Syd doesn't want him to know."

Roy went across the hall to his elder brother's room.

He found him sitting on the side of the bed, looking very pale.

"I guess you'll have to help me dress, Roy," he said with a sorry sort of smile.

"Perhaps you'd better send a telegram," Roy rejoined. "There won't be any handwriting to recognize on that."

"No, no, I must go myself. You will understand some day, very soon, why I feel this way, and then, Roy, you may pity me and forgive me if you can."

Roy thought of his brother's theory. Sydney's talk was very strange, but not stranger than this midnight proceeding. Well, he would wait until he had seen this last through before deciding whether or not he ought to report to his mother.

He helped Sydney on with his clothes, then went to the window to see if the carriage was there. He saw it standing in the glare of a street lamp. It was just half past eleven. He started to his own room to get his coat.

"Be careful to make no noise, Roy," Sydney cautioned him.

But when Roy entered his own apartment, there was Rex sitting up on the bed, rubbing his eyes.

Roy hoped he would go at once to his room, but he began to talk about the strangeness of his having fallen asleep in that way, and then when he saw what time it was, wanted to know why Roy hadn't gone to bed.

"How could I when you were in the way?" Roy answered smilingly, and just then Sydney called to him softly from down the hall, "Roy, aren't you coming?"

There was no help for it. Roy went to the closet and took down his overcoat.

"Why, where are you going this time of night, Roy Pell?" demanded Rex.

"Just out for a little while; good night, old fellow. You'd better go straight to bed."

"But look here, Roy." Rex was following him out into the hall. "This is mighty queer, your going off this way. Does mother know about it?"

Rex ceased abruptly. He had come face to face with Sydney, all dressed for the street.

"Reggie, what are you doing up?" Sydney asked, and to Rex his voice sounded cold and stern.

"I fell asleep on Roy's bed. But where are you two going? You're not fit to be out of bed, Syd," as the latter reeled and made a quick clutch at the bannisters.

"Rex, help me down stairs with him and don't make any noise." Roy spoke in an authoritative tone, and Rex meekly obeyed.

"Perhaps Rex had better come along, too. I ordered a coach, so that you could put your feet up. There'll be plenty of room."

Roy whispered this in Sydney's ear as they went slowly down the stairs.

"All right; just as you say. I suppose it won't make much difference how soon you all know now."

"Rex, you may come along if you like," said Roy, when they reached the lower hall, and Sydney was sitting on the settee. "Run up quickly and get your coat."

Rex eagerly seized the opportunity, and in five minutes they were all in the carriage, and the driver had started for Seventh Street.

Sydney was considerably exhausted by the effort he had already made. He lay back in the seat breathing heavily.

"Do you know where we are going and what for?" Rex leaned forward to whisper in Roy's ear.

"It's a mystery to me, too, but we want to watch out carefully that no harm comes to Syd," Roy whispered back.

When the carriage halted before the little dwelling where Mrs. Fox lived Roy started to get out, but Sydney drew him back.

"No, I must be alone," he said. "Have the carriage wait here till I come out."

But he had scarcely taken a step from the carriage when his weakness overpowered him. He tottered, and would have fallen had not Rex sprung out and caught him. Roy was at his other side in an instant, and together the two boys supported him.

"You will have to help me up to the door, I guess," he whispered faintly; "but don't ring; knock lightly."

There was no one passing at the moment, nor did any light shine from the interior of the place. Roy knocked against the glass in the door, and the latter was opened on the merest crack.

"Who's there?" came the demand in a quivering old woman's voice.

"Sydney Pell. I am ill, but I was bound to come. My two brothers are with me. Can't they help me in to a seat? They will then go away again."

"No, no; they can't come in," was the quick response. "There must be no noise. It's a risk to have you here."

"Then can you open the door wide enough to help me in?" returned Sydney.

The answer was the swinging back of the door and the reaching out of the old lady's arm.

"Go back to the carriage, boys, and wait," said Sydney, and the next instant he had disappeared within the mysterious dwelling.

CHAPTER XXX

SYDNEY FREES HIS MIND

"You're pretty weak, aren't you?" This was Mrs. Fox's remark as she eased Sydney down into a rocking chair in the little parlor. It was quite dark, save for the faint light that came in from the street lamp over the curtain pole in the window.

"I suppose I was too weak to venture to come," Sydney answered, "but I felt that I must. Did you understand all that I meant to say in my note?"

"I understand that you know of a great sum of money that is coming to Maurice Darley. It's strange, very strange."

"Why is it? Did you know anything about it? Did you expect it?"

There was a note of alarm in Sydney's tones.

"No, not that in particular. But you must tell me all the details before I dare to tell any more."

The old lady seated herself on a low chair close to Sydney's side. It was extremely weird, this confidential talk in the darkness.

"What details do you want?" Sydney asked.

"Why, proofs that there is really something to this

fortune. Maurice has talked too much about others that have nothing to them."

"You see him often, then," exclaimed Sydney eagerly. "He's here, perhaps."

"S'h!" commanded the old lady in a stern whisper. "Yes, he is here. He is in the back room yonder. I am so afraid he will hear us. That is why I had you come at midnight, when he would be sound asleep."

"But why can I not see him?"

"Because he is weak — weak in his mind. He is all the while fancying that he is rich. A talk about money would excite him so that I fear the consequences."

"And you say he knew Mr. Tyler?" Sydney remembered and spoke this name very softly.

"Yes, he talks of him continually now."

"Was he in his office once?"

"Yes, I believe so."

"One more question. Has this Mr. Darley any children?"

"He had one once — a boy. But it must have died when a baby, soon after Mrs. Darley did. And now do you know why I do not want you to come here with stories of riches for Maurice Darley? He's daft on the subject already. I do not want him to go so far that they will take him away from me."

"You are fond of him, then?" asked Sydney.

"He is all I have. If he goes I must live alone. It is my delight to care for him. The little money David left me is enough for my simple wants. Maurice lives

like a lord in his fancies. Why do you want to come and disturb us in our content?"

"Because I must," Sydney broke out, as passionately as he could in restrained tones. "Don't you understand that the money which belongs to Maurice Darley I have been diverting to other uses? It was left to him by Mr. Tyler, but I tore up the will. He made it about three hours after another one, in which he had left everything to the woman who had acted as a mother to me for twenty years.

"He was a vacillating old man. I felt that he might change his mind back again if he should live three hours longer, so when he was dead I tore up the last will. I alone knew what it contained, and I have been a miserable man ever since."

Sydney bowed his head on his hands, and there was silence in the little room for a moment or two.

"You — you are a criminal, then?" said the old lady presently.

Sydney winced at the term, but at the same time he felt a sense of relief, as one does after taking a plunge into cold water. At any rate the shock of the first contact was over.

"Yes, I suppose I am," he answered. "And I am ready to suffer the penalty. The only excuse I have to offer is the fact that what I did, I did not for myself, but for those I love, who have done so much for me. And now it is not joy, but misery, I shall bring them."

"You are repentant, though," murmured the old

lady softly. "It is not as if you were hardened and only gave up when some one else found it out and forced you to. There is hope for you in that. But how much money is there?"

"Nearly half a million. But some of it has been used, put into a house, which of course will be given up to Mr. Darley."

"Then you will take him away from me?" It was almost a wail with which the old lady said this.

"No, you can come with him, of course."

"No. It will be his taking care of me then, and that will be so different. Oh, why did you come to disturb us?" She seemed quite forgetful for the time of the presence of any one else in the room, of her own caution to Sydney to speak quietly. Suddenly she appeared to recollect this latter necessity.

She ceased the half moaning she had begun and clutched Sydney's arm tightly.

"I suppose," she whispered, "that it would not be right to ask you to keep this money?"

"I can't keep it," Sydney replied. "I have suffered enough from it already."

"But how can you give it to a man who is not in his right mind? He thinks he is a wealthy man. I have given him a quantity of gilt paper to play with. He is like a child, you know. The possession of real money will not make him any happier."

"But there is the son," suggested Sydney.

"I told you he was dead."

"I am not so sure of that. I think I have seen him. Would he not be about seventeen now?"

"Yes, and you have seen him?"

It was with difficulty the old lady kept her tones within bounds.

"But you cannot be sure it is the same," she went on.

"No. I cannot be certain, but I am pretty sure."

"Perhaps he looks like his father. Wait, I think I can find a picture of him in the dark."

"But I cannot see it in the dark."

"By holding it close to the window you can get the ray from the lamp on it. There! here it is, I think."

Mrs. Fox took the portrait to the front of the room, and parting the curtains a little, held it for Sydney to look at.

"Yes, it is very like," he said. "This picture must have been taken when Mr. Darley was quite young."

"He sat for it before he was married. But where is this boy?"

"Living at a little town out in New Jersey. He wants to find his father."

"How comes it he isn't dead?" the old lady wanted to know.

Sydney told the story of Miles Harding as he had heard it from Rex.

"Do you know why he was compelled to give up the child?" he added.

"Poverty, I suppose. You know he was very sick once, and he lost everything. That was what unset-

tled his reason. But to think he should have given out that the child was dead!"

"Did you ever hear him speak of the Morriseys?"

"No, I never heard the name before. But I should like to see this boy. Does he know that his father is living?"

"No, not yet; you see I did not hear of it until to-night. But I must not stay longer. My brothers are waiting for me in the carriage. We must arrange what we are going to do."

"I don't know what to say. The boy ought to have his rights. Can't we fix it all quietly some way? I don't think you meant to do wrong."

"Yes, I did. I did everything with my eyes open. I ought to suffer for it. The only trouble is that those I love will suffer with me. But don't you think the restoration of fortune will bring back Mr. Darley's mind?"

"I don't know. I can't tell about that. He is very queer."

"Do you have a doctor for him?"

"Oh, no. I'd be afraid they'd want to take him away. I expect I'm selfish about it. But bring the boy here. He is old enough. We can talk it over with him, and maybe his father will recognize him."

"I can come any time, then?" said Sydney.

"Yes, now I know who you are."

"Good night, then. I shall see you soon again. I feel better than when I came."

Sydney rose and walked to the door without assist-

ance. As soon as the boys saw him they hurried out to help him into the carriage. Within three minutes they were driving towards home and a church clock near by chimed one — for half past twelve.

"Boys," began Sydney, "I have something to tell you. I was not glad before that I was not your own brother. I am glad of it now, because — I am a criminal."

There was a pause. No one spoke. There was no sound but the rattle of the wheels. It was too dark to see the expression on the faces of the twins. Rex was leaning partly forward, one hand gripping Roy's knee. He could think of nothing save the night Mr. Keeler had spent with them and the horror they had had of him before they found out that it was his brother whose picture was in that book.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE CONFESSION TO THE BOYS

THE carriage had gone two squares before the silence in it was broken. Then Roy spoke.

"What is it, Syd?" he said. "I am sure you are worrying yourself needlessly over something — are magnifying it from a molehill into a mountain."

"Needlessly? Oh, boys, would that I were! But as soon as I tell you, you will understand it all. And I shall tell you now — in a minute. But just give me your hand, each of you, that I may feel the warm pressure of your confidence before — before you know the worst of me."

Roy and Rex instantly put out their hands. Syd took one in each of his and held them tight for an instant. Then he dropped them quickly and began to speak rapidly.

"Do you remember, Roy, the night last July you went home in Dr. Martin's carriage and left me alone with Mr. Tyler? The will that left all his money to mother had been signed and witnessed; you know what it contained. I felt so rejoiced for you all, although I had no idea then that there was a chance of your so soon coming into possession.

"I sat talking to the old man for an hour or so, about his investments and the various savings banks in which his money was deposited. Finally he appeared to grow restless.

"'Have you got that will I made, Sydney?' he asked.

"I pointed it out to him where it lay on the table.

"'I can make another one, can't I?' he went on.

"'As many as you please,' I told him.

"'Then write out this one and I'll sign it,' he said, and he dictated a document that left every penny of his fortune, except the five thousand to Ann and a thousand he left to you, Roy, to Maurice Darley, if living, or his heirs if dead.

"'You and Ann can witness it,' he told me, and I called her in, and she wrote her name under mine.

"He named myself and Dr. Martin as executors just as before, and said that I could probably find Maurice Darley without much trouble. He turned over in bed then and I asked him where Darley was when he last heard from him, but he did not answer. I went over to the bed and looked at him, and found that he was dead.

"Then the temptation flashed into my mind.

"'What a shame,' I thought, 'that owing to the caprice of a foolish old man these people who have been so good to me should be deprived of the fortune which had just been left to them. This Darley is undoubtedly rich. He has behaved contemptibly to the

man who did so much for him. Why should he get the money?'

"Then I recollected that you had gone into the kitchen, Roy, earlier in the evening, to get Ann to sign the first will, and then the doctor had told you that it was not necessary. I reasoned that she would undoubtedly suppose that the will she did sign was the only one that had been made, because I was sure she had not read it.

"All these things flashed into my mind within a few seconds of time as I stood by the bedside of the dead man. My determination was quickly taken. I knew that Ann had gone home, that there was no one near to see the deed.

"I took the new will and held it in the flame of the candle till it was entirely consumed. Then I blew the cinders, so that they scattered about the room and would not attract attention."

"Oh, Syd!" This in a kind of gasp from Roy.

Rex said nothing. He was sitting upright now, still seeming to see before him the face of "No. 131," Mr. Keeler's criminal brother.

"Yes, I knew you would all shrink from me when you knew," went on Sydney. He spoke in a voice that was almost hard now. It was as if it had become so from the spurring that was necessary to enable him to make his confession. "I shrank from myself as soon as the last piece of tinder had vanished from the candlestick. I could not bear to stay in the house. I hurried off to the undertaker's, and then

stopped at Dr. Martin's to tell him that the miser was dead.

"He said something about the good fortune that had come to us so quickly. I shuddered and hurried home. But I could not sleep. I seemed to have become an old man in that one instant while I held that sheet of paper in the flame of the candle."

"That's the reason we did not see you at breakfast the next morning?" said Roy softly.

"Yes, I felt that I could not face you all just yet."

"And that is why you looked so terrible and fainted away when I told Scott Bowman about our inheritance at your office?" added Rex.

"Yes; I was planning all sorts of ways to fix things, so we needn't take the money. Then I saw it was too late. Now you know what has been on my mind all these months. I knew that my health was being undermined by the strain. But I did not care for that. I even hoped at times that I might die, because then I felt that you need never know."

"And — and was it anything in particular that made you tell us to-night?" asked Rex.

"Yes. It seems very strange how things come about, but then it often happens so. Do you remember, Reggi — Rex, telling me the name of the man who left your friend Miles with the Morriseys'?"

"Yes, and it was Darley, the same name you mentioned just now. And you fainted then, just as you did that time at the office. You don't mean that Miles —"

"Yes, I am almost certain that Miles Morrisey is really a Darley, the son of Maurice Darley, to whom all this money belongs. When I suspected this I knew that the end had come — that I must trace the thing down and confess."

At this point the carriage halted before the door of the house. Rex sprang out, then Roy, and both boys waited to help Sydney. But he made no movement to follow them.

"Aren't you going to get out, Syd?" asked Roy.

"No; I have no right to live among you any more. Now that you know, it will seem like having a convict in the house. I can go to some hotel. You can send my things to me and I will stay there till — till this is settled up and they put me away."

Roy stepped into the carriage and put his face so close to Sydney's that the latter felt the smooth flesh against his day's growth of beard.

"Dear old fellow," whispered Roy, "you must come. We haven't cast you off. And — and besides, we want you with us to help us decide what to do."

"Don't be so good to me, Roy. I can't bear it."

But as he spoke, Sydney got out, and the three went up the steps.

Nothing was said as they ascended the stairs. There was danger of disturbing the household.

"Good night, Syd," said Roy, when they reached the top.

He put out his hand, but Sydney did not see it in the darkness.

"Good night, Roy," he responded.

Rex said nothing, but when Sydney's door closed behind him, he drew Roy into his room with him.

"You must stay with me to-night, Roy," he said, and he began taking off his coat.

"Why didn't you speak to Syd before we came in, Reggie?"

"I couldn't, Roy. I feel awfully sorry for him. But he's committed a crime, and I can't help but think all the while of Mr. Keeler's brother."

"It's terrible — awful." Roy's face was pale; he looked almost as Sydney had looked at one time.

"What are we going to do?" Rex sat down on the edge of the bed, a despairing droop to the shoulders that he usually carried so squarely.

"We must give up everything to the rightful heir."

"But where shall we go then? We've sold our house in Marley and spent the money we got for it. We'll be worse off than we were before, Roy. Oh, dear, why did you ever look up at that trestle and see that old man crawl out on it?"

"I've wished I hadn't before now," replied Roy gravely.

"The money hasn't made us happy as you expected it would, and now see what misery it has brought. But I suppose it's wrong for me to regret doing what I did. And don't think so hard of Syd, Reggie. Remember that he did what he did, not for himself, but for us."

"I'll try my best, but I don't feel now as if I could

ever touch him again. And think what he has brought us to! Poverty, after just giving us the taste of wealth."

The twins did not sleep much that night.

CHAPTER XXII

A HARD DAY FOR THE TWINS

Roy and Rex slept far into the morning, which was Saturday. They were awakened finally by a persistent knocking on the door and Jess's voice:

"Are you boys going to sleep all day? Have you forgotten we were all going to Marley at eleven o'clock? And here's a note Syd left for you, Rex. He's much better and gone to the office. Get up now or we shan't save breakfast."

"All right," responded Roy, and he shook his brother and told him about Syd's note.

"I wonder what it's about," murmured Rex.

Then he saw it on the carpet, where Jess had poked it under the door. He snatched it up eagerly and read:

"I am going to telegraph for Miles to come in and stay over Sunday. He must be told while he is here. He will get to the house in time for dinner."

"I wonder if he expects me to tell him?" muttered Rex. "Great Scott, it'll be mighty queer to entertain a fellow in a house that really belongs to him!"

"And I wonder when mother and the girls are to be told," added Roy. "Do you suppose Syd could have told mother already?"

But there was no sign that Mrs. Pell knew from her demeanor when she poured the coffee for them.

"I must go down and see Syd about it," said Roy as they went out into the hall together. "You'll have to go to Marley without me."

"And I'm sure I don't want to go," added Rex.

Their decision carried dismay to the hearts of the girls.

"You must go, boys," said Eva. "The Minturns have invited us to lunch, we have accepted, and it would be very impolite for you not to go now. Besides, Jess and I can't come home after dark alone."

"If you knew what I do you wouldn't feel like going either," returned Rex, not heeding the warning glance cast at him by his brother.

"What do you know, Rex?" asked Jess, looking from one twin to the other with a keen gaze. "There is something between those two," she added, turning to her sister. "You take Roy, Eva, and I'll take Rex, and we'll make them up and confess."

The method of "making" employed was to tickle the boys, who were each very susceptible to this form of torture. This was terrible. To have the thing turned into a joke when it was so fearfully serious. Roy spoke up quickly:

"We'll tell you in a little while now, girls," he

said. "But seriously, I think you had better give up this trip to Marley."

"But what excuse will we send the Minturns?"

Roy hesitated. This was a poser.

"Can't you put it off?" he said finally, as a makeshift.

"Of course we can't, without giving a reason for it," returned Jess. "I think you boys are just as mean as you can be. Because you've got up some scheme between you that you'd rather do than go with us, you just won't go."

"Ah, Jess, it isn't that. It's — but I can't tell you now. Come, Rex, we'd better go after all. One day won't make any difference."

Rex objected a little longer, but was at last won over.

"I don't suppose we could tell them without Syd's consent," he said when he and Roy had gone up stairs to get their coats. "But it'll seem exactly like dancing on our own graves."

"Oh, not so bad as that, Reggie," returned Roy.

The day was a terribly hard one to both boys. All sorts of plans were discussed and adopted for future good times.

Charlie and Ethel Minturn were invited up for a week from that day to take lunch and go to a matinee.

"They'll never be able to take them," Rex found opportunity to whisper to his brother. "I wish we'd told the girls about it this morning."

"So do I, but I didn't like to till Syd said he was ready."

The Minturns could not fail to notice that the twins had something on their minds. Ethel spoke of it.

"Oh, it's some piece of boys' mischief, I'll be bound," exclaimed Jess, whereupon Roy and Rex exchanged glances and their hearts sank lower still.

On the way home in the train Rex announced that Miles Morrisey was coming that evening to spend Sunday with them.

"But I thought you and Roy were going to a meeting of your school society," returned Jess. "If it hadn't been for that we could have stayed to dinner at the Minturns'."

"Great Scott, I forgot all about the Stylus!" exclaimed Rex. "Well, it don't matter; we'll have to give it up any way."

The coming of night seemed to bring with it to Reginald a realizing sense of all that the new order of things would mean. He relapsed into thoughtfulness, in the midst of which he half sprang from his seat with an inarticulate exclamation.

"What's the matter, Rex?" inquired Eva.

"Oh, nothing," he responded. But the color deepened slightly in his cheek, and he looked furtively at Roy.

The cause of his start was the remembrance of what Sydney had said about the name Darley having caused him to determine to confess.

"If I had not gone off with Harrington that time,"

was Rex s inference, "Miles would not have come into my life, and we would not now be facing poverty."

But the blush was the shame at the idea that he would be willing to enjoy the fruits of Sydney's crime provided he did not know about it.

"I always feel sorry for Miles when he comes to see us," remarked Eva.

"Why?" asked Rex quickly.

"Because he seems to feel embarrassed, as though he were out of place. He isn't in the least. He has very nice manners, and I'm sure is a perfect gentleman. But what he needs is a little more self assurance."

"Oh, he'll get that fast enough now," said Rex, and then looked fixedly away from the scandalized glance he knew Roy was directing at him.

"I'll go home with the girls if you'll wait at the station for Miles, Rex," and Reginald was glad to be left alone for a few minutes.

"It doesn't seem as if it could be so," he mused, as he walked up and down the pavement opposite the Public Buildings. "Miles and I to change places!"

People hurrying to catch outgoing trains jostled him; the clang of the cable car bells sounded every few seconds; the noises of the city life he loved were all about him.

"Where shall I be a year from now?" he asked himself.

But it was nearly time for Miles's train. Rex turned and went up the stairway to the left of the station

building. As he did so, he passed a familiar face coming down. It was the boy who got him into trouble with the Chinaman that July afternoon six months before.

But Rex felt no resentment now.

"If that was the only trouble I had to think about!" he told himself enviously.

Of such power is comparison.

Miles's train was on time. Rex saw Miles standing on the step of the forward car, ready to spring off at the first opportunity. His face lighted up to a still greater radiance at sight of Rex waiting for him.

"I didn't think you'd come to meet me," he said, as he shook hands. "It is awfully good of you. I'm so glad to see you."

There was no doubt of this. One could read it at once in the way he looked at his companion.

"I suppose you were surprised to get Syd's telegram," remarked Rex. "What did he say in it?"

"Come and spend Sunday with Rex," answered the other. "I was here only a little while ago, but I was glad enough to come again. It is ever so kind in you to send for me."

"Didn't you think there might be any other reason for our sending for you?" asked Rex, after an instant's pause.

A troubled look crossed Miles's face.

"No; what do you mean, Rex?"

"Don't you remember what you found out a little

while ago — about the man who left you with the Morriseys?"

"Oh, my father. Has your brother heard anything about him? Is that what you want me for?"

"It's about that; yes. I'm not sure whether your father has been found, but something else has been found that belongs to you."

"And what is that?" asked Miles eagerly.

"A fortune."

CHAPTER XXXIII

A QUEER FISH POND PARTY

MILES stared at Rex as though he did not comprehend the meaning of the word.

"A fortune?" he repeated. "What fortune?"

"Why, your fortune, to be sure," returned Rex.

"But I don't understand," went on Miles. "How can I have a fortune?"

"Easy enough, since your father has one. Syd knows all about it. You're a lucky fellow, Miles. It's somewhere about half a million."

Miles looked very grave for half a minute, then a smile broke out over his face.

"Come, Rex," he said, "I see through your joke, so you might as well drop it. You oughtn't to have made the sum so high if you expected me to believe it."

"It's true, all the same, Miles."

But Miles still shook his head and declared he should wait to believe till Mr. Sydney told him all about it.

"I wonder if Syd will tell him the whole thing to-night?" Rex asked himself, but Sydney was not home to dinner.

There was a note from him to Rex, however, asking that he and Roy and Miles should meet him at the Continental Hotel that night at eight. This threw Rex into a great state of excitement. He knew that the crisis was at hand.

Roy took things more quietly, but inwardly he was none the less excited.

"Syd wants us to meet him down town," he said as they rose from the table.

He had been waiting for Rex to tell Miles, but the other had not yet brought himself to do it.

"Where are you going?" Jess wanted to know. "To the theater?"

"No, indeed," responded Rex. Then he folded up his napkin quickly and left the dining room.

"Has this visit got anything to do with my father?" Miles whispered to Roy, as they went out into the hall together.

"I think it has, Miles, but I don't know much more about it than you do."

There was not much said by the three boys on their way down town. Rex was in one of his silent moods, and made no effort to get out of it.

Roy tried to talk, but there was such a weight on his mind that he made but poor success of the attempt.

Miles was far too excited, however, to notice the difference in manner of the twins compared with their usual cordiality.

They found Sydney waiting for them in the corri-

dor of the hotel. He was looking very haggard, but he seemed very glad to see Miles.

"I have good news for you, my boy," he said; "good and bad, too. I have found your father, but he is not quite himself."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Miles, while Roy and Rex looked their interest.

"His mind is affected," Sydney went on. "We hope the sight of you may have a favorable effect, but be careful not to be excited yourself when you see him. Take it quite as a matter of course."

Miles drew in a long breath. It was going to be rather a difficult matter for him to take easily a meeting with the father he had thought never to see.

"Where is he?" he asked in a faint tone.

"Not far from here. Come, we will go there at once."

On the way to Mrs. Fox's Sydney explained that he and the old lady had arranged that she should give a sort of boys' party at which Mr. Darley should be present. He would then have an opportunity to study Miles quietly, while the latter was engaged in playing games.

"You look so much like him," Sydney added, "that we hope he may recognize you."

Miles appeared to be somewhat astonished when they halted before the odd little home in Seventh Street. But he said nothing, and the next moment they were all being warmly welcomed by Mrs. Fox.

The old lady was so excited that both her hands

and voice trembled. She came near crying when she first saw Miles, but she greeted him exactly as she had the twins. There was a game of Fish Pond on the center table.

"Now, boys," she said, "try your luck."

They all drew up to the table, Sydney taking a rod, too. The old lady stood looking on behind Miles's chair. Presently she went out into the back room and in a few minutes returned, accompanied by a gentleman who did not look to be over thirty-seven. He was dressed very handsomely and his resemblance to Miles was striking.

"Mr. Darley, boys," said Mrs. Fox, as the two came up to the table. "Go right on with your fishing; we will watch you."

She had taken up her stand this time behind Rex, who was sitting just opposite Miles.

"Glad to meet you, boys," remarked Mr. Darley, in a pleasant voice. "How is the market?"

Rex, with an effort, collected himself sufficiently to answer, "Oh, pretty fair, sir."

"Only pretty fair, eh?" went on the other. "Keep at it, though. You're bound to win some time, as I have. Look here."

He put his hand in the side pocket of his coat and drew forth a great mass of chips, all covered with gilt paper.

A look of agony was on Miles's face. It was almost worse than finding no father at all, to find such a one as this.

"Don't you want to take my rod and fish a while, sir?" he said, feeling that it would be impossible for him to longer sit still.

"Thank you; you are very kind. I might take a single flyer."

Mr. Darley stepped around to take Miles's seat, but as the other rose they were face to face, and very close to each other for an instant. Mr. Darley put out both hands and grasped the boy by the shoulders.

"What is your name?" he said in a tone that was quite different from the one in which he had hitherto spoken. It was much more decided, and firmer.

"Miles," answered the other, trying his best to keep his excitement down.

He could see Mrs. Fox standing just behind his father, her hands clasped together in an agony of suspense.

"Miles, eh! Well, you look as if your name ought to be Maurice. Great Cæsar! doesn't he look like me, Mrs. Fox?"

He wheeled around so suddenly that the poor old lady was taken quite unawares. She dropped her hands quickly to her sides and had not a word to say.

"Don't he look like me?" Mr. Darley now appealed to Sydney, who managed to stammer out: "I certainly see a strong resemblance, sir."

"What is your last name, young man?" went on the other.

Miles hesitated an instant. He was about to say

Darley, but some happy instinct prompted him to substitute "Morrisey."

Mr. Darley started.

"Morrisey, you say?" he exclaimed.

A swift change passed over his features. He had dropped his hand from Miles's shoulders, but now reached forth and caught him by the arm.

"Come with me," he said quietly, and led him into the back room.

The others looked at one another without speaking. No one thought of the game. The fish lines, tangled up, were lying in the pasteboard pond.

Mrs. Fox had sunk down on the sofa, her head covered with her apron. From the inner room came the subdued sound of voices.

"Do you suppose he has recognized him?" It was Rex who at length broke the silence, and he spoke in an awed whisper.

Nobody made any reply, for footsteps were heard approaching from the rear. It was Miles. His face was handsomer than Rex had ever seen it. It was lighted up with joy.

He came straight to Rex and put a hand on his shoulder, while he leaned over till his chin rested on the other's head.

"I want to tell you first, Rex," he said, "who have been the means of bringing me to this happiness. He knows me. His mind has come back to him. He called me Maurice, and he remembers giving me to the Morriseys to take care of for a while. Then his

brain went back on him, and he thought I was dead."

"Where is he?" asked Rex.

"Lying down on the bed. He is utterly exhausted. I must go back to him now," and Miles hurried off again.

CHAPTER XXXIV

REX RISES TO THE OCCASION

"It's wonderful. I never heard anything like it." This was Mrs. Fox's exclamation when the four were left alone in the front room again.

"All the credit belongs to you, Mr. Pell," she went on, turning to Sydney. "It was you thought of this way of doing things."

"Oh, he might have recognized him any other way just as quickly," returned Sydney. "And now some one must tell him about Mr. Tyler's legacy," he added. "I want to get that off my mind."

"I guess he can't stand that to-night, Mr. Pell," returned the old lady. "You'd better leave it till to-morrow. I'll keep Miles here with him to-night — there's room — and then they can both go to see you to-morrow."

"Yes, that will be the best way," Sydney agreed. "But I had hoped to get it off my mind by this time. Come, boys."

"I trust I shall see you both again," said Mrs. Fox, as she shook hands with the twins.

Then the three Pells went out and homeward. It was only nine o'clock.

"Mother ought to know, don't you think so, Syd?" said Roy.

"Yes, she must know to-night. But I don't see how I can tell her. I don't see how I can. She trusts me so fully."

"Then let me tell her," suggested Roy.

"No, no. I must confess myself. I shall do it now as soon as we get home. Then I can be ready to put myself in Mr. Darley's hands to-morrow."

"Do you think he will — will —" Rex began and came to a sudden stop.

"Send me to jail?" Syd finished for him. "He may. He has a right to do it. I deserve to go. Oh, boys, I wonder how you can bear to be with me."

"You did it for our sakes, Syd," responded Roy.

But Rex said nothing.

When they reached the house they found Eva and Jess in the parlor, entertaining company.

"Come in, boys," Eva called as they passed the door.

Roy and Rex obeyed the summons, leaving Sydney to go up to Mrs. Pell in the library.

They found Mr. Keeler to be the caller. Rex started when he saw who it was.

"Why, where is Miles?" asked Jess.

"He stayed with his father," replied Rex.

"His father!" echoed both girls. "Why, has he found him?"

"Yes," answered Roy, "Syd found him. There's a story for you, Mr. Keeler, a regular romance."

Rex began to look nervous. He feared that his escapade with Harrington was about to be related. But Roy skillfully told the main points in Miles's career without encroaching on this.

Mr. Keeler stayed until ten o'clock, and while they were talking and laughing in the parlor, the twins were thinking of what was going on in the room above.

When they went to kiss their mother good night they saw that she knew. The girls exclaimed at once at sight of her face.

"You are ill," cried Eva.

"No, Eva," rejoined Mrs. Pell, "it is worse than illness."

The tears welled up in her eyes. She could say no more.

Sydney was not with her, neither was he in his room. The girls were clamorous to know what was the matter.

"Tell them, Roy, I can't," Mrs. Pell at last found voice to say.

Rex could not stay to hear. And Roy never suffered as he did in the few moments it took him to relate his foster brother's crime. It seemed as though it were as cruel as to drive nails into the fair flesh of the young girls. And yet they must know.

"How could he do it, how could he?" Eva murmured again and again.

"Perhaps he didn't," Jess suddenly exclaimed. "He's nothing to show for it — the second will, I

mean. Perhaps there's something wrong with his brain, and he only imagines there was one and he destroyed it."

But Roy shook his head. There was Ann to prove, if necessary, that she had signed the other document.

For a long while they sat there. It seemed as if black despair had settled upon them and there was no way out.

For years Mrs. Pell had leaned upon Sydney. In an emergency like the present, he would be just the one to whom she would go for counsel. And now — he had failed her utterly.

"What did you say to him, mother?" asked Roy after a while. "Were — were you kind to him?"

"I tried to be. I tried to remember that he had done all for our sakes, but I feel like a ship without a rudder."

Roy left his seat near Eva and slipped into a chair next his mother, who had bowed her head on the desk in front of her.

She had been writing a note to a charitable society of which she was a member. The check she was to send them lay all signed, ready to be inclosed.

"Moms," whispered Roy, using the pet name Rex had invented and pressing one of his mother's hands tightly in his, "you have us. We are growing fast. I am sure we shall get along."

"Bless you, my boy." His mother kissed him on the forehead, then lifted her eyes reverently, as she added: "Yes, and I must not forget that there is

One who is always a friend to the needy. And now, children, we must go to bed. To-morrow we will decide what to do."

Roy stopped at Rex's door, went in and found his brother tossing in bed.

"Have you told the girls?" he asked.

"Yes."

"How did they take it?"

"Better than I expected they would."

"But what are we going to do, Roy?" Rex went on. "We can't stay here."

"No, of course not."

"But what will people say? Won't there be a terrible scandal?"

"You musn't talk that way, Rex. Remember that you and I are the ones mother must depend on now. If she sees us looking on the dark side it'll make it so much the harder for her."

"That's it," returned Rex. "Life is something you must go ahead with. You can't lay it down when you get tired. All right; I'll remember what you say, Roy, but it's an awful come down."

Rex, however, "came up to the scratch," as he himself would have expressed it, nobly the next day.

Nobody went to church, and about half past eleven the door bell rang and "Mr. Darley and son" were announced.

Miles, as we shall continue to call him, sent up word to know if he could come up to Rex's room.

"Do you know?" asked Reginald, as he met him in the doorway.

"Yes; Mr. Sydney came around to us this morning. I can't understand it. But I don't want you to feel—"

Miles hesitated. It was very embarrassing for him to express just what he wanted to say. Rex helped him out.

"I'm awfully glad for you, old fellow," he said heartily. "And I don't want you to worry about us. We'll get along some way."

"But that won't do," Miles persisted. "If it hadn't been for you I might have been a common tramp now and never found my father."

"And if it hadn't been for you I would probably have been dead long ago," Rex retorted. "So you see we're quits."

"No, we're not, and I don't want that we should, till I give you what I think you ought to have. Father says I may and—"

"Miles Harding—Darley, I mean, if you do that I'll—I'll never speak to you again. There, take your choice—quits or my friendship."

Rex's pride conquered. Miles was still his slave.

"I'll never say another word about it, Rex," he replied meekly, and for the first time Reginald felt that he could face poverty bravely.

CHAPTER XXXV

A FISTIC ENCOUNTER

It is summer again, but in Batemans the town in which we now find our friends, the Pells, this banner season of the year, does not deck itself with all the attractions that caused it to be eagerly looked forward to in Marley.

There are no creek, no hills, no trees, nothing but board walks, board houses, board fences, and the "boarders we take," as Rex would conclude the sentence. And these are the same in summer as they are in winter, except that they are all hotter and more unpleasant than ordinary.

Batemans is a far Western town. A friend of Mrs. Pell's was putting up a hotel there at the time of her trouble. He had appealed to her for some woman to run it.

"I don't want a man," he wrote. "There are too many men out here now. I want somebody who will give home comforts which I want to make a speciality of, in place of a bar."

Mrs. Pell considered it a providential opportunity.

She replied stating that she would take it herself if she could have her children to help her. And they had gone out there in February.

Mr. Darley had been kindness itself. He not only refused to prosecute Sydney, but wanted to settle a portion of his fortune on the Pelis.

"You are fully entitled to this," he said. "It is through you that my boy has been restored to me."

But Mrs. Pell was firm as Rex had been firm.

"It is enough that you allow us the time in which to make our plans," she returned.

Rex never murmured at the prospect of Batemans. Not even when the dreary aspect of the place, with mud two feet deep in its streets, first dawned upon him. He felt that he ought to rejoice rather that his new lot was to be cast so far away from all his old friends.

There were no educational facilities in Batemans; at least none of which the twins could avail themselves. Then they found plenty to do in helping their mother.

Rex acted as clerk, made out the bills and received the guests; Roy saw to the purchasing of supplies, and aided his brother in keeping objectionable characters out of the house.

There were no amusements and no society except that which they furnished themselves in the family circle. Roy often thought if he had had this life to look forward to, his whole previous existence would have been embittered. But now that he was living

it, strength seemed given him in some way to bear the burden.

Sydney had gone to England. They asked him to write and let them know how he was getting along, but he would not promise.

Miles wrote regularly to Rex, even when the latter did not reply. He and his father had moved into the handsome home next the Harringtons', with Mrs. Fox as housekeeper.

"I wonder what people think of the thing," Rex said once to Roy.

There had been no publicity about the transfer. Only a few people knew of it and the cause.

On this July day on which we are writing, it was unusually hot. The heat seemed to be frying in the air. It was a day of all others on which to keep quiet and calm.

But this was the day on which the waiters of the Homestead House had chosen to go out on strike for an increase of wages which Mrs. Pell was not empowered to give them. They threw down their aprons just before the dinner hour at one o'clock.

"Never mind, mother," said Roy. "Rex and I will pitch in and help."

And they did, they and Eva and Jess. Rex was just carrying a tray of dishes into the pantry when he heard a louder voice than usual coming from one of the tables.

He looked around. He saw Jess, flushed to her hair, standing behind a young man who had come in

with one of the regular guests, and whom he had not noticed before.

"Come now, I'll give you a nice tip if you'll do it for me," Rex heard the fellow say.

He thought he recognized the voice. He put his tray down and hurried to his sister's side.

She had started to walk away, but the man had caught her by the dress and held her fast.

"He wants me to go to the saloon across the street and bring him a bottle of beer," said Jess.

Rex stooped quickly and disengaged the fellow's hand with no gentle touch. In doing so he looked him straight in the face. It was Ashby Stout.

"Great Scott, it's little Pell," exclaimed Stout. Then he added quickly: "Look here, youngster, what right have you to send that girl away from here?"

"A brother's right," replied Rex promptly.

"Whew!" whistled Stout under his breath, and he turned to Driscoll, the friend with whom he had come in. "Say, Sammy," he whispered, "what position does this chap hold in the place?"

"He's the manager's son," was the reply.

Having accomplished his purpose Rex went on, took up his tray and carried it into the pantry. His eyes still flashed from anger.

"Jess," he said, going up to his sister, "you must not go into that dining room again."

"But I'll have to," she replied, "I've got lots of orders to fill."

"Never mind. I'll attend to yours and mine, too. I'm not going to have that ruffian ogling you. I know who he is."

"You do? Who is he?"

"Never mind. It is enough that I know everything bad about him and nothing good. Give me your orders."

And Jess complied. Of course this compelled Rex to wait on Stout. But he gritted his teeth and went through with the process in dignified silence, taking no notice of the attempt Stout made to draw him into conversation.

When dinner was over and Rex was back in his place behind the desk, making up accounts, Stout strolled in, a cigarette between his lips.

He affected to be examining the register for a little while, then suddenly looked up to remark: "I say, Pell, that's a deuced pretty sister of yours."

I won't say that Rex did right, I can't say that he did wrong, but on the instant and without a word he leaned forward and hit J. Ashby Stout a blow on the chin that sent him staggering backward over a chair that stood just behind him.

There happened to be no one else in the office just at that moment. So Mr. Stout was obliged to pick himself up, which he did, muttering wrathfully under his breath, while Rex, very white, went on with his work.

"If you're not a coward, sir, you'll come out here and give me satisfaction for that insult, sir."

So spoke Mr. Stout. Rex closed his books and came out in front of the desk.

"I allow no one to speak of my sister in that tone," he said.

"And I allow no one to strike me," blustered Mr. Stout, launching out a blow directly at Rex's face.

Rex dodged and planted another blow on Mr. Stout's chin. Then they both went at it. Sometimes one was struck, sometimes the other. I am aware that this is contrary to all precedents in story writing. Following out these, J. Ashby Stout should have gone down under the first blow, and then been glad to slink off without risking another encounter with the redoubtable hero.

But then as I think I have remarked once before, Rex is not the hero of this story. He is a boy of very impulsive nature, as often wrong as right in his motives. Perhaps he might have taken a wiser method of standing up for his sister on the present occasion. Be this as it may, he did not regret the black eye he went up to his room to bathe a little while later.

And while the battle did not result in a decisive victory for either side, it was noticeable that Mr. J. Ashby Stout did not again accompany Driscoll to the Homestead. But some one else appeared the next day to whom Rex found it necessary to explain how he came by his battered visage.

CHAPTER XXXVI

MILES BREAKS THE NEWS

A COMPROMISE had been effected with the striking waiters, and the heat had lessened a little in its intensity. The two things, together with the nonappearance of Ashby Stout were blessings for which Rex had to be grateful.

But when the stage came in and he recognized among the passengers Miles Darley and the latter's father, he did not know whether he was glad or not. They were links connecting him with that past life which he was trying his best to forget. Now it seemed to him that only by forgetting it and thus doing away with the power of contrast, could he be happy in the present.

"You dear old fellow!" Miles rushed forward with this exclamation and fairly took Rex in his arms.

He had grown much in the past few months and the clothes he wore set off his figure to great advantage.

"I won't say where on earth did you come from," said Rex, "but where in the world are you going to, that you should take in this forsaken place?"

"Well, that's polite, I'm sure," laughed Miles.

"Can't you imagine that Batemans may be our objective point?"

"No, because I'm certain you can't be interested in saw mills, and that's the only thing that brings people here."

"But I can be interested in you, can't I, Rex? I've missed you terribly. That great house seems so lonely with only three of us in it."

"But you needn't have stayed there in the summer. There's the White Mountains or the sea coast — lots of places you could have gone to."

"If we choose to come here instead, it's all right, isn't it, Rex?"

"Of course it is, old fellow, and now I see that the best way in which I can entertain you is to tell you right off how I came by this black eye," which Rex proceeded at once to do.

"Good for you, my little game cock!" exclaimed Miles, when he had heard the story. "Speaking of Stout, your friend Harrington has tried to scrape acquaintance with me, but he hasn't got beyond the scraping stage yet. I wonder what Stout was doing out here."

"His father's in the lumber business, I believe. But I'm afraid you'll find it pretty hot, Miles."

"Well, I've had so many cold days in my time I guess I can stand a little heat."

Rex was not the only one of the Pells who was astonished by the advent of the Darleys. Their coming was a complete surprise to the entire family. And

a still greater cause of astonishment was the prolongation of their stay.

They rented two of the best rooms in the house, had awnings put up at the windows and wicker furniture sent on from Denver. Mr. Darley took frequent trips to neighboring towns. It was understood by the gossips at Batemans that he was a large Eastern capitalist, looking about for profitable mining investments.

July, August and half of September passed, and still the Darleys remained. Miles was supremely content, for he was with Rex, for whom his admiration appeared to increase with each day's added intimacy. Miles had brought his books, and they studied together some. And in spite of the forlornness of the place, the five young people managed to have a pretty good time.

One afternoon Roy and Rex were washing the omnibus out at the stable. The driver, hearing of a big strike that had been made at a mine some sixty miles away, threw up his position at once and started off to try to get rich at a hand stroke. And the boys were forced to throw themselves into the breach until another man could be obtained in his place.

This is the sort of thing they had trained themselves to expect since coming to Batemans.

"Where's Miles?" asked Roy, as he brought a fresh pail of water and set it down beside his brother.

"He was coming out but his father called him into his room."

"We'll miss them when they go, won't we, Reggie? It has been jolly good fun to have Miles with us all summer. You ought to feel quite proud to think you are a strong enough magnet to keep him here."

"I can't understand it at all, why they should have stayed," returned Rex.

He did not speak very cheerfully. The Darleys were to leave the very next week. It was impossible but that Rex should realize vividly to what they were returning. He did not tell Roy so, but he wished they had not come.

There was only one wheel of the omnibus to finish when Miles came hurrying toward them. There was an expression on his face which neither of the twins could comprehend. It was a blending of fear, joy and stupefaction.

"Here, let me help," he said, as he came up. "I want you fellows to hurry and get through. I've something to tell you."

But they had so nearly finished that there was nothing left for him to undertake.

"What have you got to tell us?" asked Rex, throwing his sponge back into the bucket.

"I wish I knew how you fellows would take it," returned Miles, a flush creeping over his face.

"Try us and find out," rejoined Roy with a smile.

"I'm simply delighted myself," went on the other. "I wonder how I can keep my two feet on the ground. It seems too good to be true."

"Then why are you in doubt how we'll take it,"

said Rex. "What pleases you ought certainly to please us."

"But perhaps this won't. It's so — so, unexpected and altogether jolly."

"Well, Miles Darley, you are certainly the most incomprehensible fellow this afternoon," exclaimed Roy. "What's it about?"

"Well, it's about the Pelks and the Darleys," explained Miles, the color still surging in his cheeks. "In union there is strength, you know, and — haven't you guessed it yet?"

"No, indeed, we haven't and just you tell us right out what it is without any more fooling," and Rex made a playful dab at his friend with the big sponge.

"All right, here goes then," and Miles drew in his breath. "Your mother has told my father that she will be Mrs. Darley, and that makes us brothers, Rex, don't you see, and we're all going back to Philadelphia together — well, don't you like it?"

Miles checked himself suddenly, for Roy and Rex stood staring at him as if struck dumb, too amazed to allow any expression to appear on their faces.

But it was all true; they were to have another test of fortune, and though its bringing about seemed in some sense to deprive the boys of their mother, they knew that not only was this not so, but that they were to gain a father thereby. "And a brother, too, don't forget that," Miles adds at my side.

THE END.